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Angela was painted by Joseph Michael Linsner of *Dawn* fame. Get caught up with our heavenly cover girl on **page 32.**

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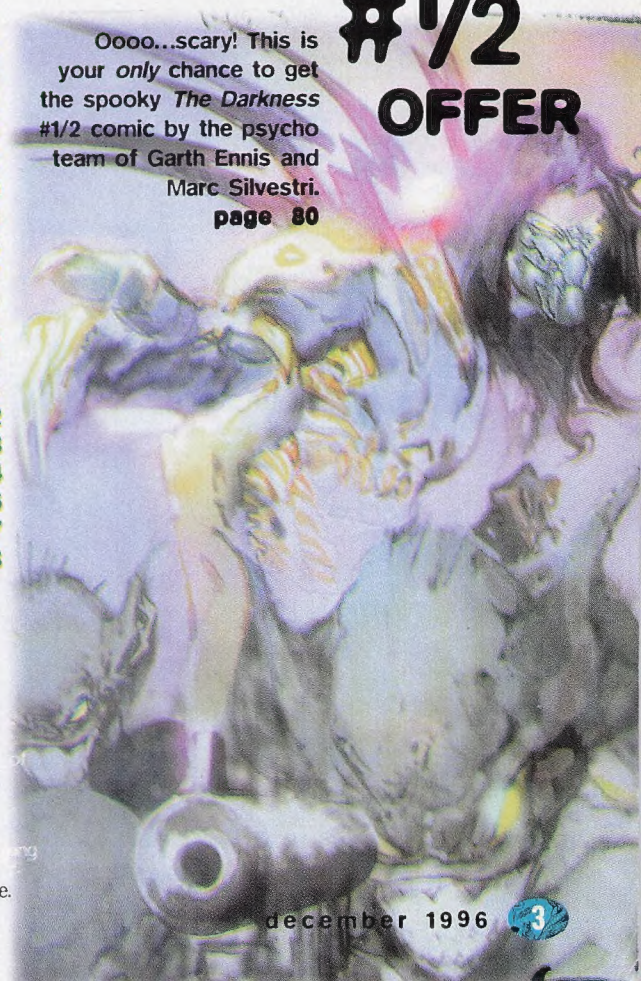
Oooo...scary! This is your *only* chance to get the spooky *The Darkness* #1/2 comic by the psycho team of Garth Ennis and Marc Silvestri. **page 80**



HEY, WHAT DOES "PHOTOGRAPHIE DE MOI AVEC LE BOSSU" MEAN IN ENGLISH?

SO LONG, BACHELORHOOD!

This has been a great month for both me and the comic book industry. First, she said, "Yes!" so I *will* be getting married—we've yet to set a date, but it will happen early next year.

Second, the release of "Heroes Reborn," the most anticipated event of the year. Jim Lee will be coming into New York soon and we'll be partying. I'll let you know about all the trouble we cause. Also, Rob Liefeld came to *Wizard* HQ to talk to us exclusively about his departure from Image and what the future holds for him.

There's been a new Spawn title release—man, is it dark!

Alex Ross had his gallery opening at Four Color Images in New York City. Lots of great *Kingdom Come* art hanging there. I hope you loved *Kingdom Come* as much as I did.

This month brings back the Spidey we all know—thank God. It's been a while, so read on and get reacquainted. There's lots of excitement in store for the web-man. Also, read our cool features on the *Dark Knight*'s 10th anniversary and a not-to-be missed Q&A with *Green Lantern* writer Ron Marz.

This month, we also have a very cool Ash glow-in-the-dark chromium card—wait till you see what glows! We have a coupon for *The Darkness* #1/2—one of the most anticipated new series of the year. Make sure you get this one. (Remember *Gen13* #1/2?) There is a contest not to be missed—win Boris Vallejo original art. You better enter, 'cause this baby can't come home with me tonight.

Take care,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Look for *Wizard*'s first toy special—*ToyFare*—coming in November. It's the best Toy Guide ever, mark my words!

P.P.S. Get ready for the Year-Ender, *Wizard* #65!

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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MAGIC WORDS

To Whom It May Concern,

"Mike Parobeck dies." That statement made my heart sink. I had just returned from the San Diego ComicCon and a subsequent signing tour of the West coast. In San Diego, I had met Gerard Jones, who worked with Mike Parobeck as the writer on *El Diablo* and *Elongated Man*. We were having a conversation about Mike. Little did we know that he passed away earlier that week.

For years, Mike and I had kept up a mail correspondence that started in 1990, when I was 17 years old and in my senior year at high school. An instructor came to my school promoting an art school with samples of the alumni's accomplishments. He showed me a copy of DC's *El Diablo*, penciled by Mike Parobeck. I had just decided that I wanted to work in comics as a career and I wanted to know more about the business. I managed to get Mike's address from the art school and wrote him, sending three pages of a comic I was working on. I asked if he would mind looking at the whole book and give any suggestions or criticisms.

Mike wrote back with a very expressive and constructive letter, telling me to send him everything. From then on, he told me what artists and books to study, and he critiqued everything I sent him, asking for more and telling me of the areas in which he saw improvement and the ones I needed to polish. When I got my first paying comic work, I put a dedication in that issue to Mike for his artistic guidance and encouraging support. He was touched by the dedication, and I continued to update him on every new artistic project. He continued to critique them, often sending me sketches of how he would have composed a particular page. I have a drawer full of his letters, sketches and suggested layouts that he sent me over the years. In fact, I always think of Mike Parobeck whenever someone asks me to look at their portfolio. I always try to be as constructive and honest with them as Mike was with me.

When I got home from the West, I pulled out all of Mike's letters and sketches and spread them out all over the floor. I read every one of them again like I had dozens of times before. Although I never met him in person, Mike Parobeck deeply touched and affected my life. I will truly miss him.

David Mack
Bromley, KY

Mike Parobeck passed away from complications resulting from diabetes on July 2, 1996. David Mack is the creator of* Kabuki, *published by Caliber Comics.

Sailor Who?

"Sailor Moon." I've been reading letters to *Wizard* for, oh, 32 months or so and I've rarely, if ever, seen a groundswell in the mail like I've seen for "Sailor Moon." The anime show is being canceled in the U.S., and there are a lot of fans who would like to see it continue. See last month's "Trailer Park" and this month's "Manga Scene" for more information. Call the Sailor Moon Hotline at 818-955-5405 for the latest details.

"Shelf Life," the article on the 100 best comics in recent years that we ran in *Wizard* #60, has also generated a lot of response. Most of it was of the "here's one of my favorites that you didn't list" variety. The most common story people told us we missed? That would be "The Great Darkness Saga," which ran in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #290-#294.

We start off this month with a little housecleaning...

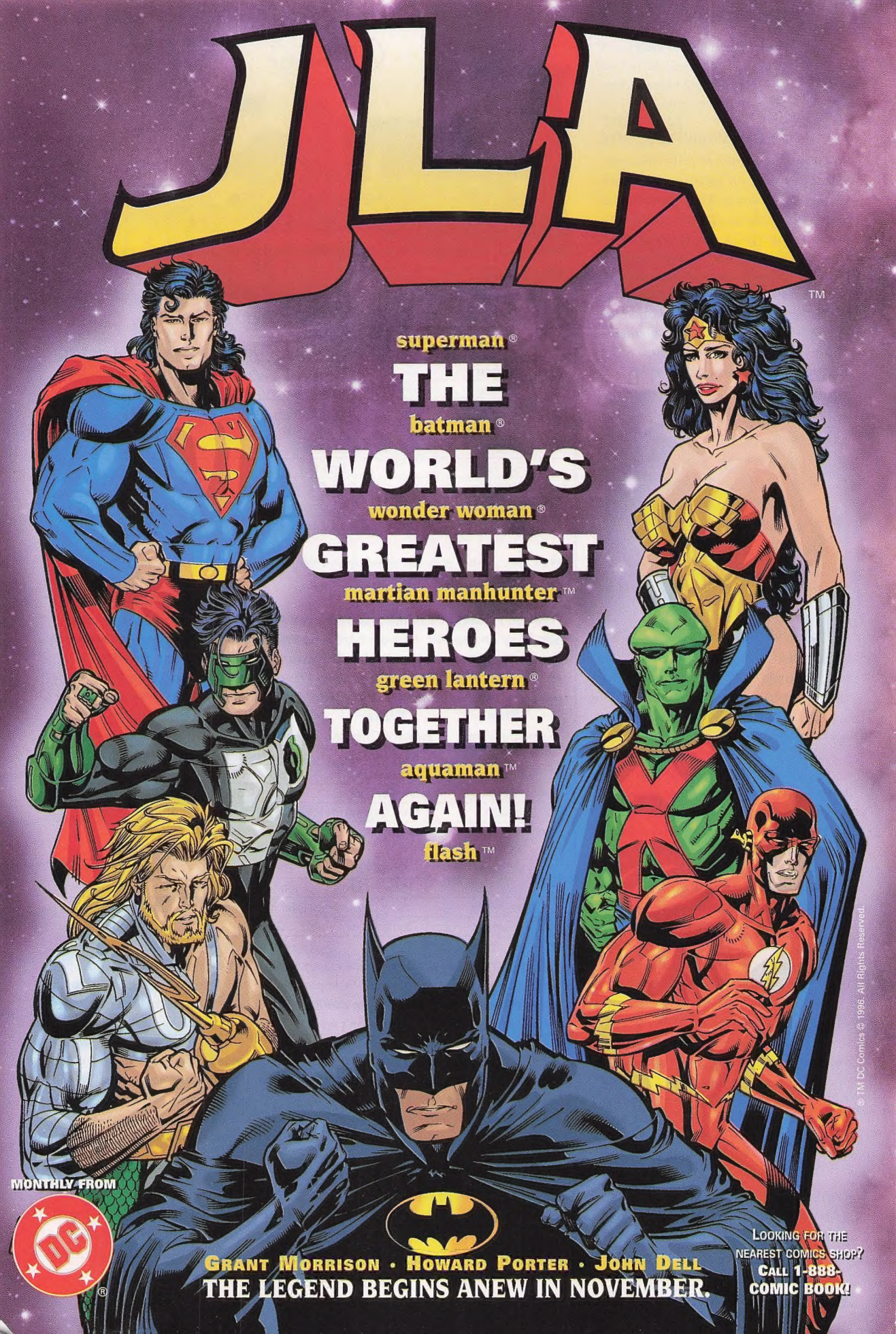
Dear Jim,

An unfortunate mistake was made in the credits of the recent *Lady Death: The Crucible* #1/2 *Wizard* mail-in offer. Jason Jensen was listed as the colorist for the story when, in fact, Brett Smith should have been credited for the cool colors! Brett, we apologize! Be on the lookout for more of Brett's killer color in upcoming Chaos! products!

Diane Martin,
Managing Editor
Chaos! Comics

Okay. Now that we've got that squared away, onto the weird questions...

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS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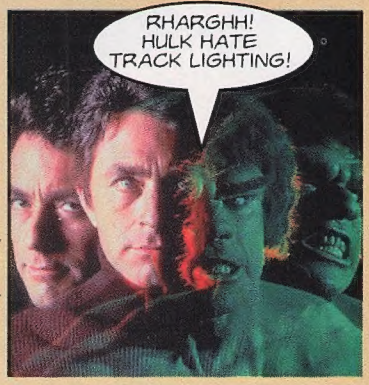
Dear Jimmy-Me-Boy,
What do you do with all the Letter Art that doesn't cut the mustard and is not printed?

Joe Miller
Brooklyn Park, MN

Some gets forwarded to interested parties. I forward all leftover Milk and Cheese Letter Art to Evan Dorkin, who gets quite a kick out of it. Envelopes with Chaos! characters get forwarded to Chaos! Comics and occasionally appear in letter columns there. A lot winds up hanging on the walls in our offices, including the one and only Ralph Snart envelope I've seen, which I have hanging above my desk. The rest, like the rest of the unused envelopes, get recycled.



'Incredible Hulk' photo courtesy of Everett Collection.

Dear Jim,
In the *Incredible Hulk* comic book, the Hulk's alter ego is Bruce Banner. But in the 1970s "Hulk" TV series, he's named David Banner. What happened there?

Josh Rinehart
Burlington, CO

It has been widely reputed that Bruce, for whatever reason, was considered too feminine a name for television back in the '70s, but according to Marvel's John Cerilli, "The producers of the 1970s television show thought 'Bruce Banner' sounded much too alliterative—hence the moniker switch to 'David.' But fear not, true believer! 'Bruce Banner' has been restored for 'The Incredible Hulk' animated series appearing on UPN."

Dear Wizard,
What kind of shampoo does Lady Death use? I want to know 'cause she just has that bounce!

Also, I have a problem. I'm a girl and I read comics. I read *Wizard* (of course), but most of my family says that it's not very ladylike. What should I do?

Jessica Ward
Kenner, LA

Lady Death "just has that bounce"? Boy, does that sound like a punch-line in search of a joke. Anyhoo, I didn't know, so I called Francisca Pulido at Chaos! Comics and she said, "Lady Death is an all-natural woman and doesn't use anything in her hair." Huh? "An all-natural woman"? Sounds like another punch-line in search of a joke!

Since I had her on the phone and since she's a female of the species, I also asked Francisca what you could do about your problem. She recommended you do what she does: "Every month when the new issue of Wizard comes out, all the ladies here at work come over to my house for tea and we all discuss the new issue. And that's very ladylike."

Dear Wizard,
1) Where in the world is Chris Claremont? He's been my favorite writer since I started reading comics. Is he still writing *X-Men*, or

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Hey Jimmy,
In response to your request for the 10 comic titles and dream creators we'd like to see that you ran in *Wizard* #61, I've jotted down these for you:

Title	Writer	Artist
Astro City	Kurt Busiek	Alex Ross and Brent Anderson
Avengers	Mark Waid	George Pérez
Batman	Frank Miller	Dick Sprang
Fantastic Four	John Byrne	John Romita Sr.
Justice League	Gardner Fox	Neal Adams
Sandman	Neil Gaiman	Kelley Jones
Sgt. Fury	Stan Lee	Dick Ayers
Spider-Man	Kurt Busiek	Steve Ditko
Superman	Dan Jurgens	Gil Kane
X-Men	Chris Claremont	Dave Cockrum

Well, that's it, hot dammit! What do you think?

Matt Reck
Tinton Falls, NJ

What do I think? I think that you're obviously trying to kiss some butt by putting Sgt. Fury on your list. I have a hard time believing that there's another bozo out there other than me who would actually want to see that title as one of their Top 10. But just for fun (and because I said I'd do this a while back), here's my list of the titles, complete with creators, that I'd like to see if only 10 titles could exist:

Title	Writer	Penciler	Inker
American Flagg!	Howard Chaykin	Howard Chaykin	Howard Chaykin
Avengers	Roy Thomas	John Buscema	Tom Palmer
Batman	Frank Miller	Neal Adams	Bill Sienkiewicz
Books of Magic	John Ney Rieber	Peter Gross	Gary Amaro
Sandman	Neil Gaiman	Mike Ploog	Shawn McManus
Sandman Mystery Theatre	Seagle/Wagner	Painted by Alex Ross	
Sgt. Fury	Stan Lee	Dick Ayers	Johnny Severin
S.H.I.E.L.D.	Mike Grell	Jim Steranko	Jim Steranko
Spider-Man	Stan Lee	John Romita Sr.	John Romita Jr.
Superman	Dan Jurgens	Gil Kane	John Romita Sr.

I think it's kind of weird that we independently came up with a Jurgens/Kane team on *Superman*. And I also think that it would be impossible for Alex Ross to keep up the pace on a monthly painted book, like I've got down for *SMT*. But what the heck. That's what lists like this are for—we can dream, can't we?

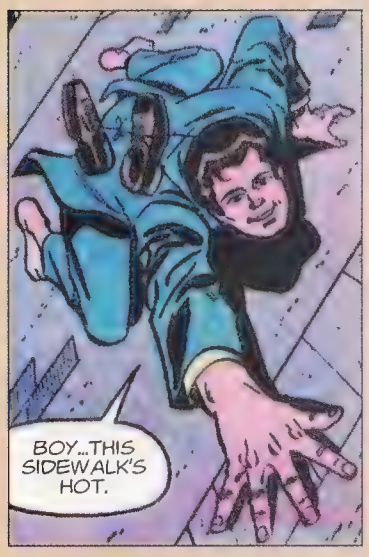
has he moved on to something else?

2) How old is Stan Lee?

Charles Akins
Crossville, TN

1) Chris Claremont is currently writing Sovereign Seven every month, published by DC Comics. He's also written DC's Superman/Wonder Woman: Whom Gods Destroy "Elseworlds" mini-series, out right now.

2) Stan the Man is 73 years old as of this writing, having been born on December 28, 1922.



Dear Wizard,

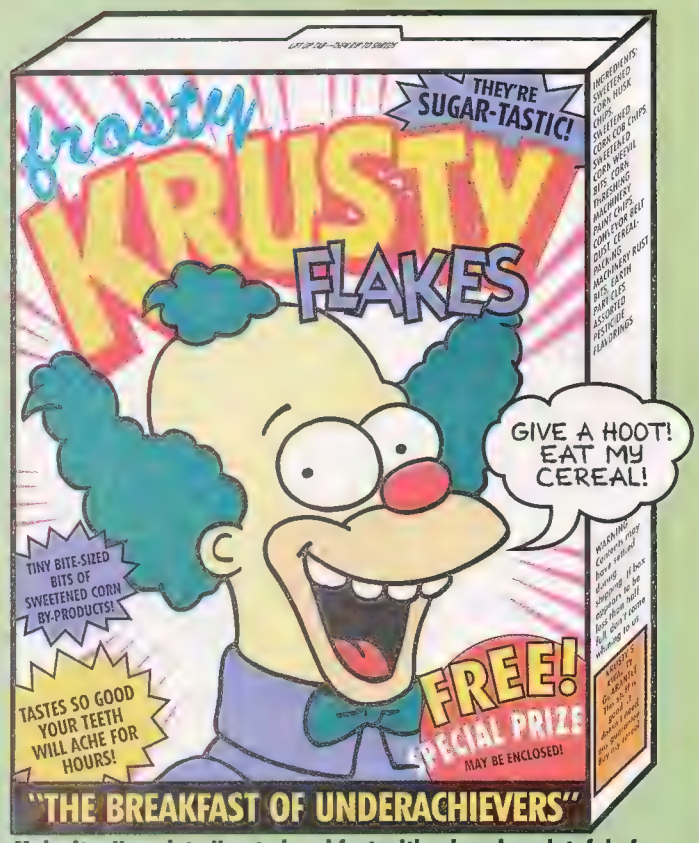
How come Peter Parker has to remove his shoes and socks when he wants to climb a wall as a "civilian," but he is able to climb walls in his Spider-Man costume, which covers his feet much like socks do?

Mike Drake
Middlesex, NJ

That Cerilli guy at Marvel says, "You know, with the decline of today's fashions, you simply can't trust a good shoe to be slip-resistant. But seriously, folks—he doesn't have to take the shoes off, but he prefers it that way. The fewer layers he has on, the easier he sticks to walls."

HEY, KIDS! HAVE YOUR TASTE BUDS BEEN KRUSTIFIED YET?

If not, bug your mom 'til she buys you...



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MATT GROENING

DART, A BUS, AND A BOMB FROM BOB? WHAT DO YOU DO -- WHAT DO YOU DO?

SIMPSONS COMICS #26

BONGO COMICS GROUP

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Dear Wizard,

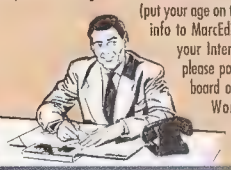
If Juggernaut survives the attack made on him by Onslaught, is there a chance he will change his evil ways and join up with the X-Men?

Philip Turbe
Nashua, NH

Okay, I'm now going to do something mean to Marvel PR guy John Cerilli. Since we've quoted him so much, I now feel I can play "Guess the PR answer" here and try to anticipate what he'll say. I think it will be something to the effect of: "The onslaught of Onslaught has affected and changed every character in the Marvel Universe, Juggernaut included. There's always been a con-

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on the last page of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your info to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, please post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").



P E N P A L S

Jeremy Steimel
Age: 15 Sex: Male
Rt. 2, Box 158
Bethany, IL 61914
Likes: All X-titles, *Captain America, Untold Tales of Spider-Man*

Kwesi "Spaz 1000" Adebisi
Age: 14 Sex: Male
220 Maltese Cir. Apt. #6
Fern Park, FL 32730
Likes: X-titles, *Gen*[13] *Spawn*

Abigail Hawkins
Age: 19 Sex: Female
706 Warren
Terrell, TX 75160
Likes: Anything Japanimation, *Spider-Man, Storm*

Storm Wolf
Age: 19 Sex: Female
3 Tilton Terrace City Beach
Western Australia, 6015
Likes: *Spider-Man* (pre-Clone Junk), *Batman, Sovereign Seven*

Tommy Rebello
Age: 23 Sex: Male
1143 Main Ave., Apt. 11
Warwick, RI 02886
Likes: *Radio Boy, Madman, Batman & Robin Adventures*

Chris Pugsley
Age: 23 Sex: Male
365 South Burner St.
East Orange, NJ 07018
Likes: X-titles, *Iron Man, Batman*

Dan Hanson
Age: 16 Sex: Male
18164 Lander St. NW
Elk River, MN 55330
Likes: X-titles, Spider-titles, *Spawn*

nection between Juggy and Charles Xavier, so who knows? Keep reading, and maybe something will develop soon."

Okay, now I'm picking up the phone and calling him. It's ringing. He's answering. I'm asking. Cerilli says, "And the Marvel 'Magic 8-Ball' says: 'Try again later!'"

Hey, that's pretty close.

Dear People of Wizard,

Do guys who draw and stuff like Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, Chris Bachalo and Greg Capullo get invited to big rich parties at mansions or something?

Joseph Jeffers
Lodi, CA

It looks like the comic set is not exactly the jet set. Says Jim Lee: "No. The only guy I know with a mansion is John Byrne, and he never invites me over."

Chris Bachalo is not a mansion-goer, either: "Nah. My idea of a party is dropping on the sofa to watch some hockey with a Dove bar in one hand and a beer in the other." Dove bars and beer? Bleagh.

Greg Capullo holds out hope: "Not yet, although I'm trying. Preferably, I'd like to get invited to a party at Pamela Lee's house."

Todd McFarlane could not be reached for comment. I think he was at a big rich party at a mansion or something.

Dear Wizard,

I was wondering if you could help me by telling me which books contained the first published comic artwork by Michael Turner, Mike Deodato Jr., Randy Queen, Joseph Michael Linsner and Jim Balent.

David D.M. Wiltfong
Chula Vista, CA

Okay. Michael Turner's first published work was a pencil assist job in* Cyberforce *#9. Deodato's first U.S. work (he was previously published in Brazil) was Innovation's* Beauty and the Beast *#1, a book based on the TV series. Randy Queen's first work was a "Winky" pin-up in* Spawn *#7. Linsner first appeared in* Continüm *#1, doing a cover and four-page story. And Jim Balent's talents first appeared as a four-page backup story in* Sgt. Rock *#393.

Dear Wizard,

Is it just me, or does Todd McFarlane bear an uncanny resemblance to geeky, super-lame comedian Bob Saget from "America's Funniest Home Videos"?

Caleb Porter
Yucaipa, CA

Yeah, there is a bit of a resemblance there. You ever notice that "America's Funniest Home Videos" is very highly rated, even though it's really nothing more than a half-hour of cup shots? Maybe that's what Spawn needs—more cup shots.

Howdy, Jimbo,

As you know, most people who read your magazine are dorks. It's the truth. The rest of the people (those few non-dork readers) are collectors that buy your magazine for its inaccurate and biased price guide. Those people are just plain stupid. Sad, isn't it? What's sadder is that most of the dorks who read your magazine don't even realize what they are! For those fools out there who continue to deny their dorkiness, I have composed this Dork Aptitude Test (DAT). So publish this letter, Jim, so that thousands of people might see the light.

Dork Aptitude Test: Go through and add up points. Subtract where told when a negative number appears. Then check the results and see where you fall.

Set foot in a comic shop on purpose: **score 5 points**

Buy comics for "financial value": **5**

Buy comic-related paraphernalia (towels, toys, X-Men pasta): **20**

Dress up as a comic character for Halloween: **10**

Dress up as a comic character when it isn't Halloween: **100**

Buy manga in Japanese that you can't understand: **25**

Buy manga, translated: **10**

Play *Magic: The Gathering*: **5**

Buy *Magic: The Gathering* paraphernalia (books, comics): **20**

Play any other type of collectible card game (*Star Trek*, *Wyvern*): **20**

Read *Wizard* for editorial content: **10**

Get *Wizard* for the price guide: **20**

Like "Star Wars" and/or "X-Files": **0**

Like "Star Trek": **20**

Buy "Star Wars" and/or "X-Files" junk: **20**

Buy "Star Trek" junk: **50**

In a marching band for fun: **25**

Have a wardrobe that consists of at least three comic T-shirts: **100**

Listen to alternative rock: **-10**

Listen to heavy metal: **-15**

In a rock band: **-15**

Ever been to rock concert: **-50**

Ever moshed at a rock concert: **-100**

Have a girlfriend: **-200**

Here's the scoring:

-390: You're a liar. You didn't add 10 points for reading *Wizard*.

-380 through +5: You are cool. You must've read this *Wizard* by accident, thinking it was the latest *Spin*. You didn't bother reading this whole test because you had a date.

+6-+250: Congratulations, I'm sorry. You're a dork.

+251-+465: You're pathetic. Even dorks look down at you. Loser!

John Pading
Alameda, CA

Gee, thanks. But I think you forgot to

Todd McFarlane photo by Jim McHugh. Bob Saget photo courtesy of Everett Collection.

PENPALS

Ana Wolken
Age: 13 Sex: Female
8 Mill Race Ct.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Likes: All X-titles, *Wolverine*, *Superman*

Rob Redwood
Age: 12 Sex: Male
220 Sovelle Circle
Columbus, MS 39701
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men*, *X-Men*, *Wolverine*

Gokhan Colak
Age: 21 Sex: Male
Savas Cad. No. 31/9
34010 Merter Instanbul, Turkiye

Duncan Proctor
Age: 13 Sex: Male
AwoWizard@aol.com
Likes: *Lady Rawhide*, *Wolverine*, *Gen*[13]

Adam Suter
Age: 15 Sex: Male
Props2Slam@aol.com
Likes: *Avengelyne*, *The X-Files*, *Gen*[13]

Chris Slater
Age: 16 Sex: Male
DirkClaw@aol.com
Likes: All X-titles (including *X-Man* and *Cable*), Spider-titles

David Rutan
Age: 17 Sex: Male
Drutan@dhs.djusd.k12.ca.us
Likes: *Scud: The Disposable Assassin*, WildStorm titles, *X-Men*

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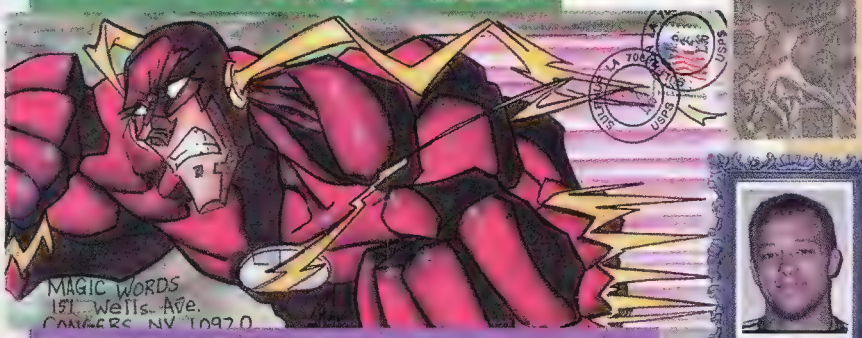
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive a Bronze *Amazing Fantasy* #15 Mint-Card, a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the issue and cap, plus a Silver *Amazing Fantasy* #15 Mint-Card! (Thanks for the goodies, Highland Mint!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address on the *back* of your envelope.

THE PRIZE

envelope of the month



FLASH Noah Trahan

FREEFALL John Fletcher Pendergrass

SAURON Shaun Jennings

SPAWN VS. VIOLATOR Jack Montmeat

mention that you should score 100 points for being so dorky as to actually compose a dork test and that you should add 20 points for every time you've injured yourself moshing like a dork at a concert. And zero points for liking "Star Wars" or "X-Files"? Everyone knows that crap is a million times dorkier than "Star Trek."

Dear Wizard,

I really dig the Tick's Saturday morning cartoon, but why is it I can't find any *Tick* comics 'round here? And why can't I get any Tang 'round here, either?

Tony Wilson
Jabib, WI

Creator Ben Edlund keeps pretty darned busy with the "Tick" cartoon show and has very little, if any, time left over to devote to comics. Tick comics came out very rarely even before the cartoon hit. There are only about 20 or so scattered issues available. Twentieth Century Fox may possibly publish a Tick Adventures-type comic based on the cartoon series, but nothing has been solidified as yet.

Tang has fallen out of favor because of the rise of fresh, non-concentrate orange juice available in half-gallon cartons and the fact that the Tang people never really updated their marketing campaign. It used to be that Tang was "the drink the astronauts took into space with them" which was great when people actually cared what NASA was doing. Now that space travel is passé, so is Tang.

Dear Jim,

Do you wear a night cap? Please tell me!

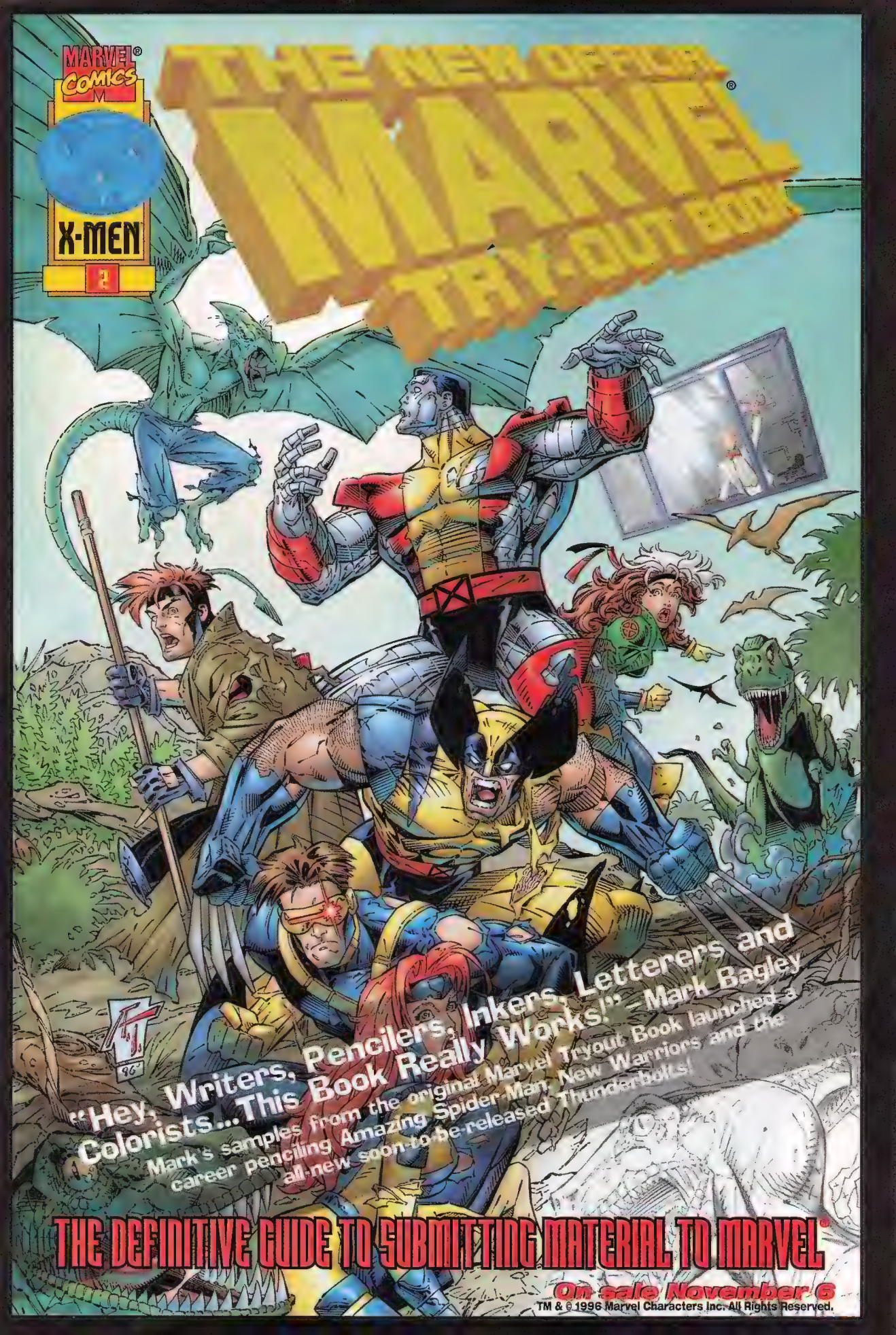
Robert Lewis
Monte Sereno, CA
SCARY408@aol.com

No, I do not wear a night cap, although I have drank many nightcaps. In fact, I think right now might be a good time for one. Set up two glasses, Joe. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin once shot the works and went for broke with a thousand screamin' trucks and 11 long-haired Friends of Jesus in a chartreuse micro-bus.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@AOL.Com


MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
2
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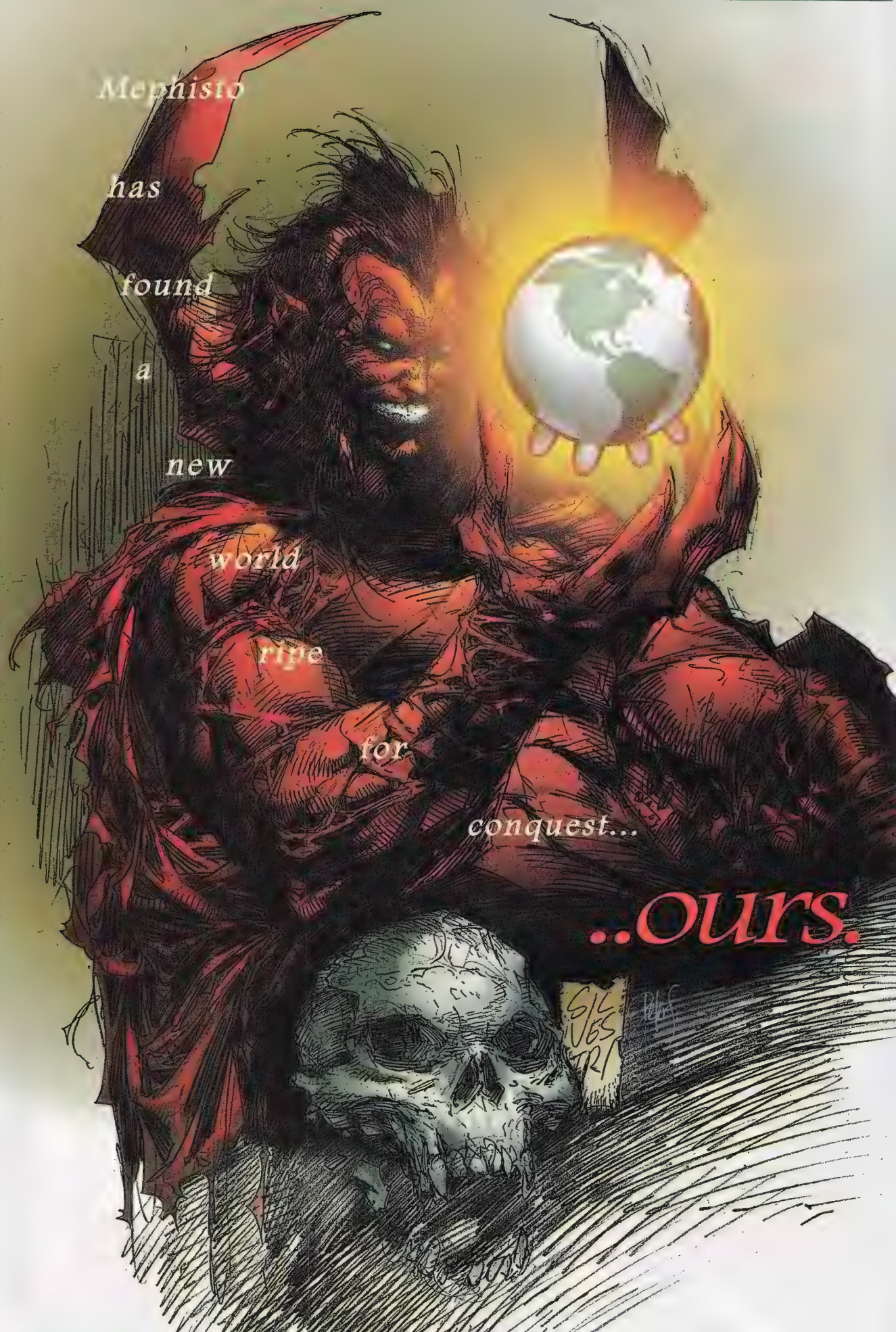
Mephisto
has
found
a
new
world
ripe
for
conquest...
..ours.

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WALTER SIMONSON
ART BY
MARC SILVESTRI
BATT
AND
BILLY TAN
D-TRON-
COLORS BY
RICHARD ISANOVE
SPECIAL ALTERNATE COVER BY
RON GARNEY

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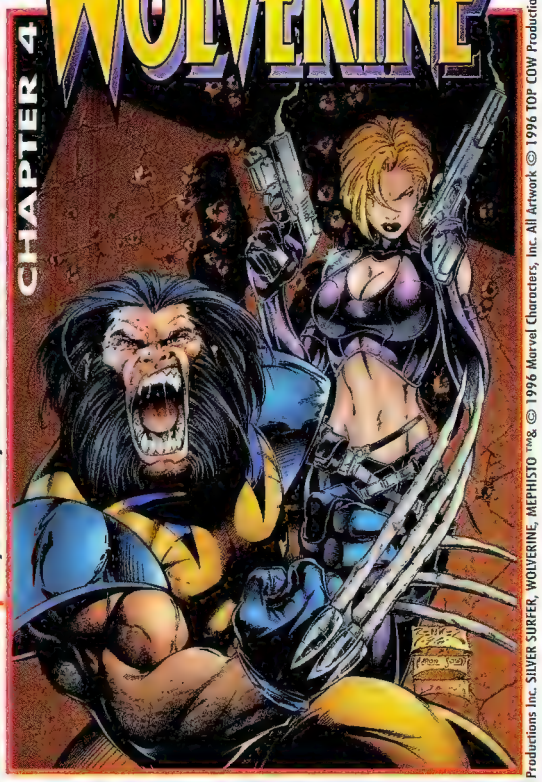

In your store the week of 12/23-12/27 GUARANTEED!

WRITTEN BY
LARRY HAMA
ART BY
JOE BENITEZ
AARON SOWD
COLORS BY
DEAN WHITE

december	january
CHAPTER 1: WEAPON ZERO/SILVER SURFER*	CHAPTER 5: WOLVERINE/WITCHBLADE*
CHAPTER 2: CYBLADE/GHOST RIDER+	CHAPTER 6: WITCHBLADE/ELEKTRA+
CHAPTER 3: GHOST RIDER/BALLISTIC+	CHAPTER 7: ELEKTRA/CYBLADE*
CHAPTER 4: BALLISTIC/WOLVERINE*	CHAPTER 8: SILVER SURFER/WEAPON ZERO+

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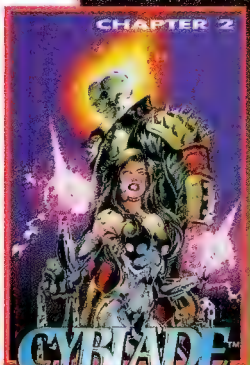
WRITTEN BY
IVAN VELEZ JR.
ART BY
ANTHONY CHUN
AARON SOWD
COLORS BY
PETER STEIGERWALD

WRITTEN BY
WARREN ELLIS
ART BY
BILLY TAN
D-TRON-
COLORS BY
CATHERINE BURCH



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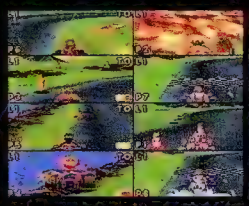

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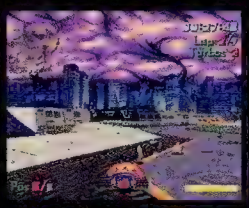

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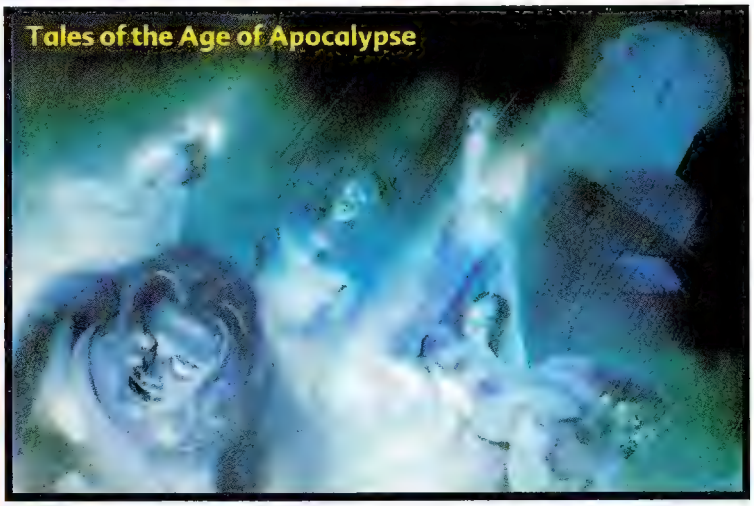
Marvel Returns to the 'AGE OF APOCALYPSE'

Marvel tries out new line of "mature" X-Men titles. "This time we're nekkid!" yelled a pantsless Wolverine. "And bald!" added a shiny Gambit.

Out-of-shape Peter Parker resumes Spider-Man persona. "Ooop... just telescoped my spine," gurgled now significantly shorter hero of dozens.

Large shirtless man spotted staining rocks at local comic con. "I just wish he'd put a shirt on," winced show attendee. "I mean, c'mon, he's got breasts."



If you thought you knew it all about "The Age of Apocalypse," boy were you wrong. This December, **Marvel** plans to return to the "Age of Apocalypse" for a 48-page one-shot special, ***Tales of the Age of Apocalypse***.

Written by **Scott Lobdell**, with pencils by **Joe Bennett** (*Supreme*), and inks by Joe Pimentel (*Generation X*), *Tales of the Age of Apocalypse* will fill in a lot of the blanks that fans of the original series may have noticed.

The original storyline, which ran from January-April of 1995, told the story of a post-apocalyptic world where **Charles Xavier** was killed before he could ever form the **X-Men**. This allowed the evil Apocalypse to take control of the world and hunt down normal humans to the brink of extinction. Small bands of mutants opposed Apocalypse, however, most notable among them **Magneto** and his X-Men, named in honor of Xavier, Magneto's deceased friend.

The decision to return to the apocalyptic universe was an easy one. "It was definitely a case of giving the readers what they want," *Tales of the AoA* editor Mark Powers said. "There was a huge demand to see more of 'The Age of Apocalypse,' and we figured that a one-shot 'Tales of...' would be the best way to go, without a full-blown return."

The story is set before any of the events depicted in the four "Age of Apocalypse" mini-series or one-shots. For example, **Nightcrawler** is still with the X-Men, **Cyclops** is a loyal follower of Apocalypse, and **Nate Grey** doesn't appear in the new one-shot at all.

"Basically, Magneto and the X-Men receive intelligence reports that Apocalypse is recuperating from a recent battle in the Blue Area of the moon," Powers said. "When Magneto learns of this, he decides that this is the best chance for the X-Men to take Apocalypse out. However, since the Earth is war-torn, and there's no such thing as space travel, they have to use **Blink**'s powers to transport the whole group up to the moon. Cyclops will be around as well, and we'll see the formation of his disenchantment with Apocalypse He'll actually end up helping the X-Men in the end."

Powers admitted that "The Age of Apocalypse" was one of those rare events in comics that fans just can't seem to get enough of. "'Age of Apocalypse' was popular because we got to see the characters who we're so familiar with in a totally new setting with new visuals, and in different relationships with each other than what we're used to," he said. "A lot of what we saw couldn't happen in the Marvel Universe. True, some things are starting to change perhaps toward what we saw in 'The Age of Apocalypse,' but as a whole, it gave the readers a chance to experience things that probably won't ever happen in the regular books."

And what about another trip back to the world of Apocalypse? Wait and see. "No one's really mentioned it," Powers said. "But I'm sure if this Special does well, we just might do another one same time next year."

■ *Matthew Brady*

ahead

IMAGE & MARS ATTACKS CROSS OVER!

MARVELS 2?

TREKKIE CON!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Liefeld's Departure Spawns Revised Origin from McFarlane

Rob Liefeld's split with his **Image Comics** co-founders is having a rippling effect on ***Spawn***.

With Liefeld goes **Chapel**, the man who killed **Al Simmons** and in essence created Spawn. With Chapel goes Spawn's origin as we know it. *Spawn* creator/writer **Todd McFarlane** said the changes aren't monumental, but will require a fleshing out of the details behind Spawn, which will be accomplished in the monthly *Spawn* book, the new ***Curse of Spawn*** title, the upcoming movie and animated HBO series, and perhaps a "**Spawn: Year One**" project if McFarlane finds it necessary.

"I have the rights to use Chapel on TV and in the movie," said McFarlane. "It's not like Rob's gone and I have to rewrite everything."

McFarlane plans to revisit Spawn's origin in the regular title, and present the relayerings of Spawn's origin simultaneously and in conjunction with the movie and the new *Curse of Spawn* title. He said Chapel's role in "creating" Spawn will be most drastically altered in the "Spawn" movie.

In the film version of "Spawn," **Terry Fitzgerald** will be Caucasian, rather than African-American, and Chapel will be a Caucasian woman because, according to McFarlane, the film project needed more females.

Whether the film character will even be called Chapel is a subject of debate, said McFarlane.

"I think we might need to give the Chapel movie character a new name," said McFarlane. "Maybe her codename in her assignment to kill Simmons could be Chapel. In the movie, Al's mind will have been playing tricks on him, so he might think Chapel was someone else. This new character, Priest, will actually have killed Simmons, and Chapel will have given Priest his orders. That way, Chapel's still in it, but not as directly."

With all these changes planned, McFarlane is aware of the repercussions.

"I don't know if the fans are going to accept changes like that," he admitted. "It's like if you made the Joker a lady with red skin. Is it still the Joker?"

McFarlane doesn't seem too worried about coming up with a revision though.

"There are a lot of ways we can relook at the origin. It's not like we're nailed down to what's been. I mean, this is comic books. Nobody stays dead. And if someone comes back to life, you just say they were aliens or something. We can change anything into anything." ■ *Gary St. Lawrence*

Graydon Creed Gets Assassinated in 'X-Factor' #130

Who shot **Graydon Creed**?

Presidential candidate Graydon Creed will be murdered in ***X-Factor*** #130, coming to comic stores this November. The assassination will have major and long-lasting effects upon not only the mutant titles, but the entire **Marvel Universe**.

"With the death of Creed, human/mutant relations gets thrown back 20 years," said **Kelly Corvese**, Editor of *X-Factor*. "Mutants will be hated more than ever before."

Leading up to the assassination, **Mystique** (Creed's mother) had seemingly been gathering her forces and planning an attempt on Creed's life. As Corvese points out, issue #130 sees Mystique get to the podium where Creed is speaking and point a gun at him, when she's stopped by X-Factor. However, when X-Factor stops Mystique, they're actually preventing her from *saving* her son's life. Apparently, Mystique had been given some information regarding the assassination and was in fact attempting to save Creed's life by using a force field mechanism stolen from Forge's lab.

"In the midst of this chaos, a plasma burst from somewhere else hits Senator Creed, basically disintegrating his body into a pile of dust, because it's important we don't have a body," said Corvese. "Part of the mystery is whether he is really dead or did he set it up himself to become a martyr for his own cause?"

Similar to the "**Days of Future Past**" (*Uncanny X-Men* #141-#142) and "**Days of Future Present**" (*Uncanny X-Men Annual* #14, *New Mutants Annual* #6, *Fantastic Four Annual* #23 and *X-Factor Annual* #5) storylines, the ramifications of Creed's assassination will almost parallel the attempted killing of Senator Kelly, which if successful would have created a post-apocalyptic world of mutant-hunting Sentinels ruling the world.

So who killed Creed?

"You know how in the X-Men Universe they have mysteries that go on for a long time like **Gambit** being the **X-Traitor** or not," said Corvese. "This will be one of those. 'Who killed Graydon Creed?' is going to be a mystery that **Sabretooth** [Creed's father], Mystique and most mutants are going to want to discover."

And, in the X-Men tradition of having drawn-out storylines, this will also remain a mystery that fans will have to wait quite a while for the answer. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• Inside sources say that **Marc Silvestri** is back at **Image** starting with books soliciting for January. (**Witchblade** is rumored to be participating in the **Image/Mars Attacks** crossover starting with issue #2 in January.)

• The **X-Men** meet **Kiss**? You bet, in ***Kissnation***, a one-shot starring the rock band slated for release in tour cities later this year, and a national release in early '97.

• **Ryan Benjamin** (*Grifter*) is slated to pencil ***Iron Man*** #4 and #5 to give **Whilce Portacio** a breather. Benjamin's last Iron Man work was the alternate cover to *Iron Man* #1.

• Sources within **Event Comics** have confirmed that the ***Impulse*** team of **Mark Waid** and **Humberto Ramos** will be doing a creator-owned series for the publisher in 1997. In the meantime, the two will do a **Gen^{13}/22 Brides** crossover in early '97. More news as it comes.

• The **Flash** is moving! To another city, that is. According to *Flash* co-writer **Mark Waid**, "What's happening in *The Flash* soon, is we're going to be uprooting him from Keystone City and maybe trying to find a new home for him in the DC Universe." Flash will move to Santa Marta, Calif., in *Flash* #122.

• **Marvel** is expected to launch a host of new titles in 1997. Among those slated is an all-new ***Alpha Flight*** and a ***Quicksilver*** series.

Image Universe to Cross Over with 'Mars Attacks'

The Image Universe is about to be invaded by little green men.

Image Comics and **Topps Comics** have announced two adjoining mini-series involving the entire Image Universe and Topps' *Mars Attacks* property. Topps will publish ***Mars Attacks the Savage Dragon***, which will actually take place between issues #2 and #4 of the larger-scaled ***Mars Attacks the Image Universe*** to be published by Image. Both four-issue mini-series are scheduled to be released beginning in December.

"Basically, it's just a good, old-fashioned alien invasion story that happens to take place on an Image Universe Earth," said **Keith Giffen**, writer of *Mars Attacks the Image Universe*, who will be joined by **Andy Smith** and **Bill Sienkiewicz** on art. "It'll feature all the Image characters, and will have some long-term effects that will carry over into each of their individual titles."

Spawn, **Gen**[13], the **Maxx** and even the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** will be featured in this all-encompassing crossover. It is rumored that **Marc Silvestri**'s **Witchblade** will even appear, marking Silvestri's return to Image Comics. *Mars Attacks the Image Universe* tells the story of the battle between the Image heroes and the Martians on Earth. In the battle, Larsen mentions that a major U.S. city will be destroyed by the Martians, which will have recurring ramifications in future Image titles.

In addition, *Mars Attacks the Image Universe* promises to kill off major Image characters. "I've been going to all the other Image people and asking what can I do," said **Erik Larsen**, Image Editor of the project. "I've gotten varying degrees of cooperation, but I can promise that there will be characters—who at one point had an Image comic book—that will die. And I can't say if any of those who have titles *now* will die or if titles will be canceled."

Dwight Zimmerman will write *Mars Attacks the Savage Dragon*, with **Claude St. Aubin** providing the art, which will feature the Savage Dragon being kidnapped and taken to Mars. In the course of this story, the origin of the Savage Dragon may be revealed, with evidence leading the reader to believe the Savage Dragon is a Martian.

The crossovers are being released in conjunction with the big-budget "Mars Attacks" film.

"I'm hoping the movie raises awareness to the property," said Larsen. "Then people who liked the movie will pick up the comics and discover the entire Image Universe." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Marvel Lets Would-Be Pros 'Try Out' Again

The project that got artist **Mark Bagley** a job at **Marvel Comics** is coming out again, giving wannabe pros another chance to show their stuff.

An all-new version of ***The Marvel Try-Out Book*** will be released at the end of October. Like its predecessor, it will serve as a manual for aspiring comics professionals on how to present their submissions to the company, said Submissions Editor John Lewandowski, who is spearheading the project.

"Some of the material will never change," Lewandowski admitted. "Other parts have been updated—there's an entirely new section on coloring, including computer coloring; there's a new section on computer lettering too. The plot has been changed, it's more **X-Men** oriented."

The package includes a plot for pencilers to work from, a script for letterers to work from, and penciled pages for inkers to work on.

"Being the submissions editor, I think I've heard every question that could be asked, and I tried to include all the answers."

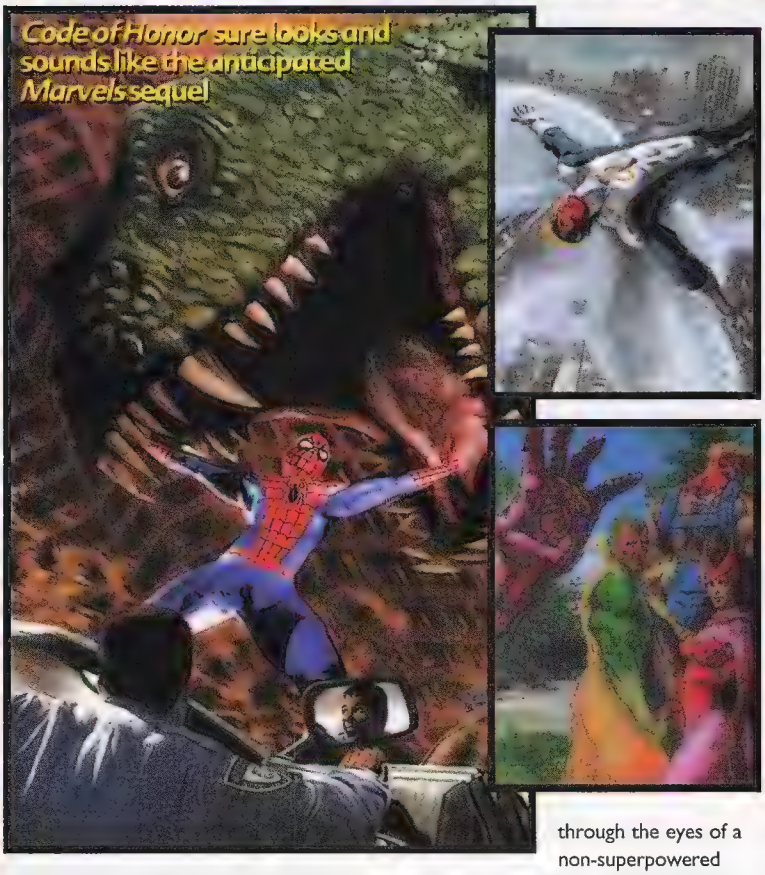
Lewandowski also promises to treat anyone sending in work from the *Try-Out Book* just the way he treats any other submission. "I want this to be a hands-on, user-friendly manual. If the purchaser sends in a SASE with his work from the book, I'll treat it like a regular submission and I'll send back a detailed critique. I volunteered to do this because I realized all the submissions would come my way anyway and I might as well have a hand in what we're trying to teach them."

The Marvel Try-Out Book will be available only through comics shops and carries a price tag of $24.95. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

We Looked It Up

Gan•thet (Gan thet) *DC Universe* **1** The last member of the race of Guardians (creators of the Green Lantern Corps) from the planet OA **2** The most skeptical of all the Guardians, and the one with the most independent thought **3** The Guardian who gave current Green Lantern Kyle Rayner his power ring **4** Most commonly mistaken by children for Papa Smurf

'Code of Honor' Looks a Lot Like 'Marvels II'



Code of Honor sure looks and sounds like the anticipated *Marvels* sequel

What looks like a ***Marvels*** sequel and reads like a *Marvels* sequel but isn't a *Marvels* sequel? Try ***Code of Honor***.

Marvel Comics will release a new four-issue mini-series in December titled *Code of Honor* that will portray the Marvel Universe through the eyes of a non-superpowered individual named Jeff Piper. **Chuck Dixon** is writing the series with a different painter on each issue. Though bearing similarities to *Marvels*, *Code of Honor* is not a sequel.

However, this project was originally touted as *Marvels II*, as far back as 1993. So why doesn't the project sport the title of *Marvels II* anymore?

"It's our latest painted project and people might draw conclusions that it's *Marvels II*, but it definitely stands as a different story," said Marvel Editor **Kelly Corvese**. "It concentrates on a new lead character, Jeff Piper. And though the story is in a similar style, it is unrelated to what happened in *Marvels*."

The story focuses on Jeff Piper and his tenure as a New York City police officer which began in the 1970s. Through his eyes, the reader sees New York City conditions worsening and how superheroes may be the cause of this increase of corruption.

Marvel characters like the **Punisher**, **Ghost Rider** and **Kingpin** will be featured throughout the storyline.

"This series asks the question, 'How can cops stand the pressure of the Marvel Universe over the last three decades?' " said Chuck Dixon.

Code of Honor features painted artwork by **Tristan Shane** (issue #1), **Terese Nielsen** (#2), **Bob Wakelin** (#3), and **Brad Parker** (#4 and all the covers). "It has a different feel than *Marvels*. Besides, I don't think I could compare myself to **Alex Ross**' stuff," said Parker. "Alex's detail is so impressive and was inspiring to me when doing this. *Code of Honor* has similarities, but with the different creative teams, it's its own series."

When asked if he would consider doing a *Marvels II*, Corvese simply responded, "If we were to ever do a *Marvels II*, we would have to use Alex Ross and **Kurt Busiek**."

■ *Matthew Senreich*

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Evil Ernie Turns Five

Happy Birthday, Evil Ernie!

Chaos! Comics begins a year-long celebration of Evil Ernie's five-year anniversary this December.

"We have a lot of neat things planned for the bad boy this year," said **Brian Pulido**, Publisher of Chaos! Comics. "And we will cap it off with something incredible."

Chaos! will unveil the **Omega Edition** in April—a special Chaos! edition which is limited to *one* copy that costs over $1,000 to produce. Fans can enter to win the Omega Edition in ***Chastity*** #1 or ***Evil Ernie vs. The Movie Monsters*** #1, both out this January. While Pulido still maintains secrecy on what exactly the Omega Edition will be, he says that all will be revealed on April 19, 1997, when a Chaos!-authorized security guard delivers the prize to the winner's favorite comic book store.

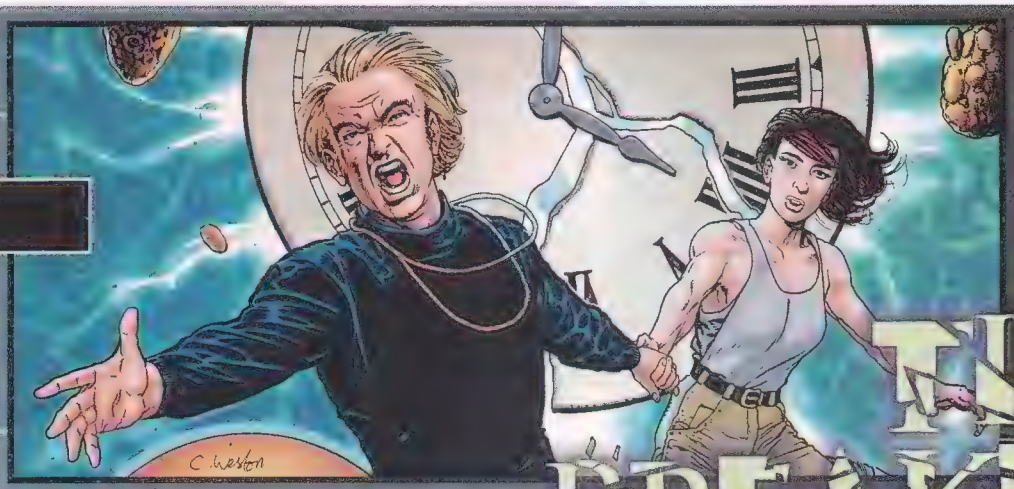
Launching the anniversary, Chaos will release the Evil Ernie cold-cast resin statue in December, which is sculpted by Moore Creations. "It's an exquisite, super-rad piece that I approved every step of the way," said Pulido.

Also hitting the stands in December and commemorating the anniversary is ***Evil Ernie's Baddest Battles (That Never Happened)*** #1. The book features pin-ups of "What-if?"-type battles by **Jim Balent**, **Steven Hughes** and **Justiniano**.

"This all sets the stage for the most ambitious Evil Ernie epic to date," said Pulido. As a pinnacle part of the anniversary and beginning in the spring, Chaos begins the nine-issue ***Evil Ernie: Quest for Nukes*** series which will wrap up around Christmas 1997.

After five years, Pulido is still excited by the possibilities of his Evil Ernie character and looking forward to the anniversary year. "A kid who controls the undead," said Pulido, "and tries to bring about the apocalypse while preying on adults, is pretty much my idea of a fun time. It's going to be a year-long celebration." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Promo art for Evil Ernie's five-year anniversary celebration



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Star Trek Conventioneers Invade Alabama

The **Klingons** are coming. But to Alabama?

Old and new "**Star Trek**" cast members, U.S. astronauts, thousands of fans and even a few Klingons beamed to Huntsville, Ala., Sept. 7-8 to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of "Star Trek."

The exhibit hall, packed wall-to-wall with Trekkers, was dominated by a display of NASA technology, highlighting the science of science fiction. Other displays featured nearly every Star Trek product imaginable, from holographic Star Trek candy and an interactive Web center to "real" tricorders that can detect electromagnetic radiation, temperature and air pressure.

William Shatner (left) and Leonard Nimoy at the 30th Anniversary Star Trek Con

The crowd packed the screening room for a preview of "**Star Trek: First Contact**," ooo-ing and ahhh-ing at more than 60 color slides of the film. Also, many companies previewed upcoming Star Trek-related toys and games at the convention, such as the Borg computer simulation game from Simon and Schuster, and talking communicator pins.

Another of the weekend's highlights was an auction of rare Playmates Star Trek toys, held to benefit Space Camp's Gene Roddenberry Scholarship Fund. Some of the higher priced lots were a Star Trek: Generation Enterprise, collector #1, ($525); a nine-inch McCoy, collector #1, ($300); and the set of Star Trek: First Contact prototype figures ($8,000). The auction raised over $30,000 for the fund.

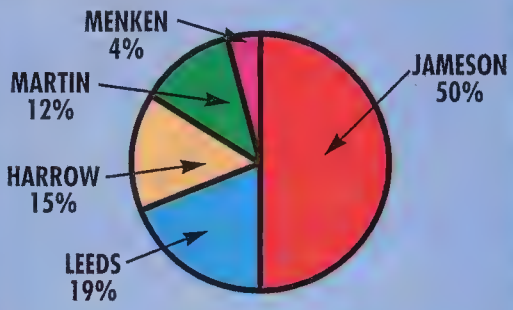
As the fans rubbed elbows with the cast members and astronauts, one theme resounded throughout: Star Trek represents a bright future. Commenting on this, **Majel Barret Roddenberry** (wife of the deceased "Star Trek" creator) said, "Gene was a person who never gave a negative thought the time of day. In his view, tomorrow would always be a brighter, better place. To see this weekend would've made him very, very happy." ■ *Matthew Brady*

Question of the Month

Who is the real **Hobgoblin**? Twelve years ago, we were led to believe it was **Ned Leeds**, but now.... Only a select few seem to know, but the rest of us will be finding out soon in a three-issue Spider-Man mini-series called ***Spider-Man: Hobgoblin Lives***, set to debut in November. Cool, huh? Being overly curious, we recently gave **Roger Stern**, writer of the mini-series, a call and asked him to throw out some suspects for us.

So for this month's fan poll, we used our "Wizard World" forum on America Online to ask:

Who do you suspect is the real Hobgoblin: **J. Jonah Jameson**, **Dr. Jonas Harrow**, **Ned Leeds**, **Senator Robert Martin**, or **Donald Menken**?



We also asked our online buddies their opinions on the following questions:

• Who is your favorite "goblin" villain: Green Goblin (**63%**), Hobgoblin (**26%**) or Demogoblin (**11%**)?

It seemed as if the majority of respondents felt that the original "goblin"—the Green Goblin—was the best. "All the others are just cheap imitations," posted one fan. Still, the numbers don't tell all, because most answers made reference to the fact that the Hobgoblin is cool, but he just couldn't beat out the Green Goblin. Unfortunately, not that many fans felt that way about Mr. Demogoblin.

• Do you prefer a villain's identity to connect directly to the main character's supporting cast: Yes (**73%**) or No (**27%**)?

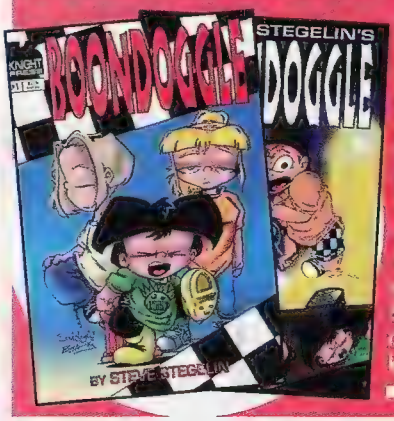
Most fans thought that a villain should somehow connect to the supporting cast because it adds a realm of depth and intrigue to a specific storyline. As one fan summed up, "It helps you understand the reasoning behind one's evilness. Plus, it adds more drama to the main character. Can he take down a friend, relative or whoever? It adds that goosebump factor to the story." ■ *Sorrell Booke*

SPOTLIGHT ON:

TITLE: Boondoggle
CREATOR: Steve Stegelin
PUBLISHER: Caliber Comics
CURRENT ISSUE: ***The Boondoggle Special*** **will be released under Caliber's Tapestry imprint in November, finishing up the Knight Press storyline. Caliber's** ***Boondoggle*** **#1 hits stands in January 1997.**
BACK ISSUES: ***Boondoggle*** **#1-#4 were published by Knight Press.**

While each issue is self-contained, *Boondoggle*'s underlying plot focuses on Roxanne McGillicuddy and her quest to find her long-lost brother. In her search, Roxanne wanders into the town of Boondoggle where she meets its interesting inhabitants, made up mostly of teens and twentysomethings. In *Boondoggle*, Roxanne stumbles across sixteen-year-old Bumper McGillicuddy who she believes is her brother. Since he resembles a picture she has had since childhood. The fact that they share the same last name adds to her belief. As she tries to solve the mystery, she ends up with a local clique featuring a character named Barbados and his friends.

Appealing to a college-age crowd, *Boondoggle* is filled with references to alternative music, featuring groups like the Violent Femmes, Ween, the Ramones and Green Day. In fact, each issue's title quotes lyrics from different songs. *Boondoggle* tells a stream-of-consciousness story filled with fairly sophisticated political and entertainment news. It's about the facts of life, and reminiscent a bunch found in the likes of "Calvin and Hobbes" or "Bloom County." Influenced more by comic strips than comic books, creator Steve Stegelin conveys a very cartoony, comic strip feel. "It's a book about interaction, where dialogue and conversation are centered," said Stegelin. "People and relationships are the key to the story." ■ *Matthew Senreich*



'FemForce' Hits 100 Issues

AC Comics will celebrate this December with the release of *FemForce #100*.

"I think readers identify and have actually come to really know the characters that have been running for over 10 years now," said **Bill Black**, publisher of AC Comics and creator/writer of *FemForce*. "It's like coming to know the characters in a long-running TV series. We have a very loyal fan base."

FemForce #100 concludes the "Full Circle" storyline and will focus on the long-running and tragic love story between FemForce's **Nightveil** and **Dan Barton** (The Black Commando). In a story building for over 60 issues, Nightveil will be faced with the ultimate decision of remaining with her true love, Barton, on a distant planet or returning to Earth with FemForce. "We have this 'Melrose Place'-type, unrequited love thing happening," said Black.

Stemming from the downturn in the comics industry in 1984, *FemForce* began in 1985 and was originally intended to be a one-shot. To AC Comics' surprise, sales reached over 40,000 copies and quickly became the company's best-selling title. The first comic book to feature all female heroines, *FemForce* mixes Golden Age characters from smaller press companies of the 1940s and '50s with Black's own creations. The origin of FemForce stems from the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt to form a government task force, tying into the all-women theme.

"We are appealing to a lot of female readers and think we have good role models for women," said Black. "Our women are not victims or counterparts to male heroes who take to the forefront. They are beautiful, buxom, yet intelligent, take-charge type of women."

Beyond issue #100, AC Comics is exploring the possibilities of adding additional pages to the book, as well as splitting the book up into one longer story and then a back-up story featuring individual characters. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

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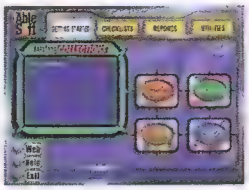

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Pérez Bows Out as 'Silver Surfer' Scripter

George Pérez has resigned as scripter of Marvel's ***Silver Surfer***, following the death of his editor, **Mark Gruenwald**.

"After Mark's death, **Bob Harras** [Marvel's editor-in-chief] and Jaye Gardner, the new editor, decided to go in a different direction with *Silver Surfer* than Mark and I had discussed," Pérez said. "Rather than take a chance on setting up stuff that would just be jettisoned by the next writer, I decided it would be better to leave the series in favor of someone more in tune with Bob's thoughts.

"There were some changes made artistically in the last issue I completed [#123], in order to make the transition work, and Glenn Greenberg will be dialoguing over my plot on the following issue, the first with art from **Ron Garney**."

Greenberg will plot #125 and **J.M. DeMatteis** (*Spectacular Spider-Man*) will supply the script. DeMatteis will take over the full duties as regular writer on the book with #126.

Pérez is quick to note that there are no hard feelings between himself and Marvel. "I bowed out and, in less than 24 hours, I was asked to work up a proposal for a Hercules series." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

NEWS BITES

BIG Ceases Publishing Comic Books

BIG Entertainment's time in the comic book universe is just about over. After December, the sci-fi-oriented company's four ongoing titles—including ***Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger***, ***I•BOTS***, ***Lady Justice*** and ***Leonard Nimoy's Primortals***—will no longer be published.

After January brings BIG's last comic book hurrah—***Tad Williams' Mirrorworld: Rain***, a two-issue look into a dark alternate reality by the best-selling author—the company will focus on only 100-plus-page novels with alternating text and art pages.

Testament of the Dragon goes to trade paperback in '97

Of the planned 1997 projects, standout novels include ***Tom Clancy's Net Force***, ***Anne McCaffrey's Acorna: Queen of the Unicorns*** (by McCaffrey and Margaret Ball) and Margaret Weis' ***Testament of the Dragon*** (by Weis and David Baldwin). Each of these books has a price tag of $12.95-$14.95 and will be published by HarperCollins, as part of a joint publishing program. Complementary standard hardcover novels will also be released for each illustrated novel. ■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

Dark Horse Book Held up at Canadian Border

Dark Horse's ***Big Blown Baby*** #1 was corralled at the Canadian border.

Canadian Customs for all of Western Canada prohibited the entrance of Dark Horse's *Big Blown Baby* #1, created by **Bill Wray**, (*Ren & Stimpy*), into that region. *Big Blown Baby* is a four-issue mini-series about a 1000-year-old God-type person trapped in the body of a baby. "The story contains some sexual humor, phallic symbols and bathroom humor," said Marketing Assistant Elisabeth Forsythe. "And that probably caused its denied entry."

As a result of the "contraband," Diamond Distributors was forced to recall all comic boxes being shipped to Western Canada. Stemming from the recall, all comics shipping that week to Western Canada were delayed one day.

"Censorship always comes down to a very basic principle," said Dark Horse publisher Mike Richardson. "You rely on the sensibilities of a single party to dictate what's appropriate for the greater populous."

Dark Horse will continue its attempts to distribute copies of all issues of the mini-series to Western Canada. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Clark Takes Over as Artist for Avengelyne Spinoff

Scott Clark has joined the Maximum team.

Clark (*Spawn/WildC.A.T.s, StormWatch*) has signed on with **Maximum Press** to pencil December's three-issue mini-series ***Avengelyne: Armageddon***, a spinoff from the popular Maximum Press title *Avengelyne*.

Set in both the present and the future, the story promises to be the final battle between the light and the darkness, and will have a direct impact upon the ongoing *Avengelyne* series.

"We are delighted to have Scott come on board and draw Avengelyne. His rendition of Avengelyne is beautiful," said **Rob Liefeld**, President of Maximum Press. "The fans are in for a real treat." ■ *MS*

Moonshadow Sequel Due in November

J.M. DeMatteis and **Jon J. Muth** will present a sequel to their series *Moonshadow* in November, as a graphic novel titled ***Farewell, Moonshadow*** published by DC Comics' **Vertigo** imprint, which recently republished the original series.

The new volume is presented almost in the style of a children's book, with facing pages of text and fully painted art, as opposed to the more traditional comic book style of the original story. "The original was the suspect memoirs of this old man…but we never knew how much of it was true," writer J.M. DeMatteis explained. "This is more of a 'tale'—there's no science fiction aspect, it's more allegorical. Stylistically, it's different, but it is the same character and it follows his life from where we left it off. And you can pick it up and understand it without having read the original series."

Farewell, Moonshadow will be 64 pages in Vertigo's "prestige" format, priced at $7.95. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Deadpool Debuts in November

X-Force supporting player **Deadpool** gets his own ongoing monthly series in November.

Written by **Joe Kelly** (a graduate of Marvel's Stanhattan project), with art by **Ed McGuinness** (*Vampirella, Wolverine '96*) and **Nathan Massengill** (*Wolverine '96*), the book will look at the adventures of the amoral adventurer without turning him into a traditional hero, according to the book's editor Matt Idelson.

"He tries to do his best, but he's been beaten down so often that he's reached the point that he views the world as chaotic, disorderly and unfair—so he's decided to be just as unfair as the world's been to him," said Idelson. ■ *PDO*

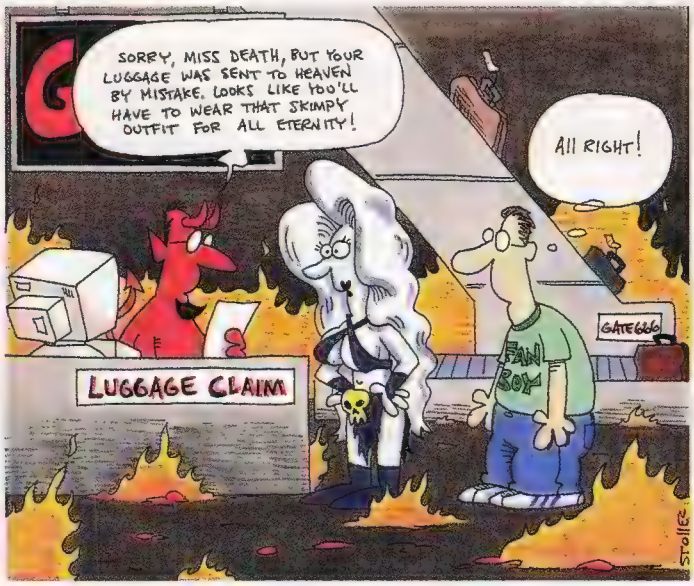
New Gen[13] Fanzine Makes Fans Part of the Team

Gen[13] fans have been heard. They demanded a forum for expressing their love and support of their favorite characters and, in December, **WildStorm** Productions will give them a place to show it.

The 48-page, ashcan cover, black-and-white fanzine, is being published by Gen[13] editor Sarah Becker. But the stars of the project are the fans, their art and their letters.

"The audience is mostly Gen[13] fans, and most of the content will be provided by fans," said **Jeff Mariotte**, WildStorm's marketing director, who added that it will also contain some "here and there sketches" from Gen[13] artists including **J. Scott Campbell**. ■ *Gary St. Lawrence*

LONG JOHNS by Adam Stoller



Dave's corner of Hell looks a little brighter.

Catching Up With...

JEPH LOEB ON 'THE AVENGERS'

With Jim Valentino's departure, Jeph Loeb has been tagged to co-write *The Avengers*, starting with issue #2 as co-scripter and #5 as co-plotter/scripter. *Wizard* decided to track down Jeph and ask him about the direction he plans to take Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

What characters are being used in the Avengers' roster?
Captain America, Thor, Hawkeye, Swordsman, Scarlet Witch, Hellcat and the Vision. And Dr. Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne are there at the moment, so one can surmise what will happen with them. That's pretty much the cast, and I'm sorry there's no Jarvis. I was not part of that decision and I do miss Jarvis. For some reason, Jarvis did not make the cross and he's still in the Marvel Universe. Iron Man will also join eventually, which will have enormous ramifications.

How closely linked are the Avengers to Jim Lee's Iron Man?
Like I said, without giving it away, there will be enormous ramifications with Iron Man and Tony Stark's involvement with the Avengers. We're really excited about tying that together at the moment.

Will the Avengers pop up in the other "Heroes Reborn" books?
The Avengers will be in *FF* #2. It's like the early days with Lee and Kirby where you go for just a panel just to see what's going on with the other characters. That's the idea of "Heroes Reborn," to show that this is a world where everyone is aware of each other. In a strange way, it's all somehow held together by Nick Fury who is either the most competent man alive or the most dangerous man alive.

What villains do you plan to bring in?
Besides Loki, Dr. Pym has a robot servant by the name of Ultron I, so one can figure out where that's headed. Kang plays a big part; the Enchantress will be stopping by. Other than that, I shouldn't get too far ahead of myself.

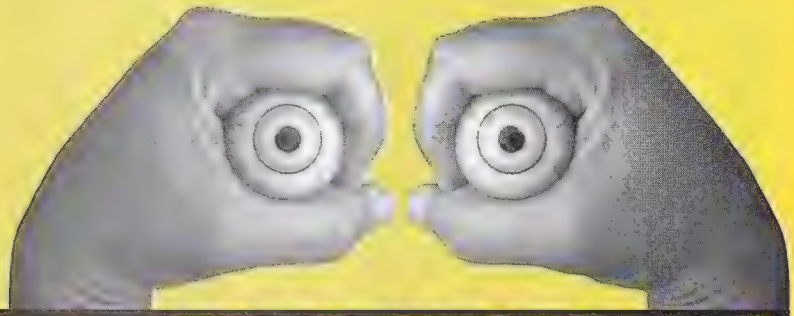
Why link the team so closely with S.H.I.E.L.D.?
I think it puts Nick Fury, who is a character I could write all day long, in the center of everything and we need to find out whether or not this is a good thing or a bad thing. In the past, S.H.I.E.L.D. operated on its own and its stories didn't necessarily reverberate into the world of the superhero. In "Heroes Reborn," Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld began with the premise that the government would be very involved if there were actual superheroes in our world. So that makes Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. very important in that regard.

Photo courtesy of Jeph Loeb

Will the Avengers be meeting up with the Hulk?
Yes, in *Avengers* #4. The Hulk plays a major part as does Iron Man in the growth of the Avengers. It's the first encounter with someone that the Avengers realize is a major, major threat to mankind. It's not a benevolent Hulk; it's a very dangerous human being. I don't want to say that he's a villain, but he will stir up some dilemmas. And we're going to be seeing sparks fly between the God of Thunder and the green goliath in issue #4.

Around issue #6, we're talking about a major crossover—the first crossover between the FF, Iron Man, Captain America and the Avengers. And the stories that we have been talking about are the danger of the Hulk, as well as Iron Man's joining of the Avengers, Tony Stark's participation in the Avengers and how S.H.I.E.L.D., who runs the Avengers, reacts to that. We're talking about a major change in how the Avengers are going to be run. Rob Liefeld, Jim Lee, Scott Lobdell and myself are still talking about this now. We are talking a major slugfest [between the Hulk and] the Thing that will put the Thing in the hospital in *FF*#7. This is the beginning of the story that will preface all of the crossover.

Which Avenger is your favorite?
That's a tough question. Growing up, I loved Giant Man and the Wasp. My favorite *Avengers* stories are #59-#60 when Hank Pym became Yellowjacket and Janet decided she was going to marry him. There was always something so cool and really understandable about being able to get as big as a building or as small as a wasp. ■ *Matthew Senreich*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AA² ENTERTAINMENT

Look for a pin-up by Jerry Ordway in *The Power of Shazam!* to *Agony Acres* #4 (of 4) in November.

ACCLAIM COMICS

Trouble is on the way in December, with the launch of *Troublemakers* #1 by Fabian Nicieza and Kenny Martinez. The adventures begin when a group of genetically engineered superhumans enters puberty.... Also that month, the *Turok* quarterly title debuts with creative team Nicieza and Rafael Kayanan (*Conan the Adventurer*). The mantle of Turok is now assumed by Joshua Fireseed, a college baseball star in Oklahoma College.... December's *Armed and Dangerous* #1 by Bob Hall starts a new four-part story arc with the tale "When Irish Eyes Are Dying." This time, Mitch Donovan returns to his roots in Dublin and runs into a world of crime *noir*-style trouble.

ARCHIE COMICS

Sonic Blast! Special #1, due in December, is based on the upcoming *Sonic 3-D Blast* game, and introduces Flicky Island.

AVATAR PRESS

The owners of the Comic Cavalcade store in Illinois are launching a brand-new line of comics, with its first three titles *Pandora*, *Silent Rapture* and *Donna Mia* hitting stands in December. Then look for *Lockers* in January.

BLACKOUT COMICS

Late November features Blackout's first live model on the cover of *Hari Kari: Live & Untamed!* #0, which will also showcase Tormentress, due to spin into her own series early next year.

BONGO COMICS

In December's *Simpsons* #27, Homer gains super-intelligence after a dangerous experiment and Springfield reels from the repercussions!.... In *Roswell* #2, the cops and a pack of drunken redneck are hot on the K-1 green guy's trail. But Ros has new friends—the brilliant, sexy scientist Jolene Fryes, cowboy Jasper Kudzu and Dagnabbit Rabbit!

BROADWAY COMICS

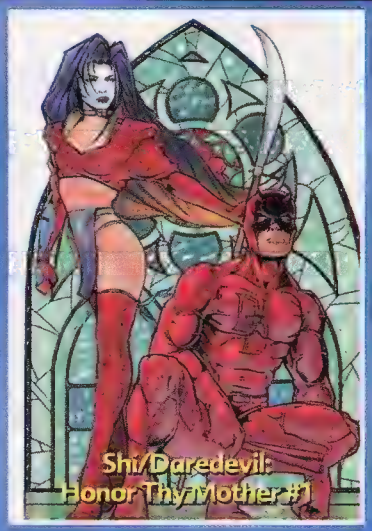
December is crossover time for *Fanboy* #7 as the de facto queen of the world meets up with Cor from *Star Seed* in "Crown of Thorns," written by Erica H. Rodriguez, with art by Tim Hamilton and Jim Fern.... Over in *Star Seed* #10, Cor takes a stand to Earth against his own father's alien invaders in the conclusion of "It's the End of the World As We Know It," by Jim Shooter, John Ross and Art Nichols.

CALIBER PRESS

Caliber revives Steve Miller's *Rust* in December with an all-new series about everyone's favorite oxidized avenger. *Rust* was formerly published by Malibu's Adventure line.... Plus, Jamie Gregory's *DreamWalker* #1 kicks off the new series under the Tapestry line. *DreamWalker* was formerly published by DreamWalker Press.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

Here's the latest scoop on the Shi/Daredevil crossover: The story has Shi possessed by DD's longtime foes, The Hand, who force her to attempt to kill the Marvel hero. Meanwhile, Matt Murdock himself is prosecuting Peter DeNyse's murder trial. The first part, Marvel's *Daredevil/Shi: Blind Faith* #1, ships on December 4, while Crusade's *Shi/Daredevil: Honor Thy Mother* #1 is slated for December



11.... Look for the special Shi poster by Frank Frazetta in December, re-presenting the legendary artist's cover to the *Shi: Senryoku Collected Edition*. It sells for $6.95, and part of the proceeds will go to helping Frazetta recover from recent health problems.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Due to a change in release dates for the "Star Wars" films (see this issue's "Trailer Park"), Dark Horse will be releasing an all-new mini-book adaptation of "Star Wars: A New Hope" in the last week of January, not the middle of February as previously reported. Look for the trade paperback and first issue of the mini-series to hit in January, followed by a monthly release of the rest of the mini-series.... The Boba Fett story recently serialized in Topps' *Star Wars Galaxy* magazine starring a Boba Fett imposter is collected in January's *Star Wars: Boba Fett—Twin Engines of Doom* one-shot.... The Big Guy gets bigger this January in *The Art of the Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot*. This $29.95 paperback contains all of Geof Darrow's mind-blowing art from his and Frank Miller's 1996 mini-series, but without any word balloons or captions cluttering things up. It's also at a much larger size (11 3/4" x 15 3/4"), so you can see all the K1 detail you missed before.... Celebrating his 150th anniversary, the Flaming Carrot gets his own 64-page one-shot this January by Bob Burden. This $5 black-and-white issue also contains an intro to a new *Mystery Men* mini-series coming later in 1997.... *Oh My Goddess!—Robot Wars* is actually a one-shot, and not an eight-issue mini-series as recently reported. Also, look for January's three issue *Oh My Goddess!—Trials of Marsha*, where the goddess computer that runs the Goddess program crashes and everything gets real wacky.... Shiro finally finds the guy who knows all about her death in *Ghost* #7, but unfortunately it shows up, hunting down the very same guy.... Hope you're hungry, 'cause on boxes of Honey Nut Cheerios hitting stores in December is an offer for three original *Jonny Quest* comics. Mmm...honey!

DC COMICS

The two-part story featuring the final pre-Crisis on Infinite Earths Superman will be released in trade paperback form in December. By Alan Moore and Curt Swan, this story is one of the best Superfables ever.... Also hitting the trade paperback format in December is a collection featuring *Preacher* #8–#17 and another containing *Human* #1–#3 (with a *Batman Chronicles* #5 tale and *Demon Annual* #2 story).

ENTITY COMICS

StarGate: Doomsday World #2, to be released in December, takes the StarGate storyline beyond the movie and will offer a special alternate Prism-Foil enhanced cover limited to 5,000 copies.

EVENT COMICS

1997 brings the first *Ash Annual* by Mark Waid and Mike Wieringo and *22 Brides: Gen 3* by Waid and Humberto Ramos.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

By popular demand, all issues of Chris Ware's *Acme Novelty Library* will go to a second printing in December.

HARRIS COMICS

Hot on the heels of the Vampirella/Catwoman crossover comes a *Pantha* one-shot written by Mark Miller and painted by Mark Texeira. Shipping in February for Valentine's Day, this one-shot will help define exactly who Pantha is and how she fits in Vampi's universe.... Look for *Cyberfrog* #1, out this February, to tell you all about the K-1 guy's origin.

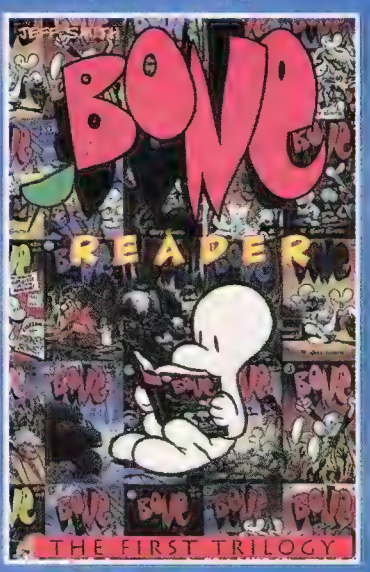


IMAGE COMICS

• CARTOON BOOKS

On sale now from Jeff Smith are two new additions for your Bone collections. First up is the *Bone Reader*

continued on page 28

A New Vision of Magic

Flanking

Smaller, faster, smarter. A creature with the flanking ability weakens its blockers and impairs their ability to deliver maximum damage.

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Phasing allows certain lands, artifacts, and creatures to shift in and out of the game. Permanent just became a relative term.

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company updates

continued from page 26

The Making of the First Trilogy, a 55-10 collection that takes a journey behind the scenes of the first 19 issues from pencil sketches and script pages to finished art, including photos and running commentary by Jeff Smith. Also available in late October is *Bone Fat, Bone Eyes of the Storm*, collecting Bone #12-#19 with five never-before-seen story pages, nine new illustrations and over 40 retouched pages from the original issues. Eyes of the Storm is available in a $24.95 hardcover as well as a $16.95 softcover.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

This January, check out the first issue of *SIEGE* by Jim Lee, Jonathan Peterson and Robert Teranishi, which ties into the upcoming WildStorm/GTE Entertainment multi-player CD-ROM game. The story revolves around an elite military tactical team, Omega Squad, which disappears during a mission and returns either as members are genetically enhanced. The game should be available immediately following the release of issue #4 of the comic. Check out the SIEGE Command Center website at http://www.im.gte.com/siege for more info.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Look for a new three-issue Crow mini-series beginning in January. *The Crow: Waking Nightmare* takes place in New York's Chinatown, as a cop is killed while trying to break up a child pornography ring.

LIGHTNING COMICS

Paul Abrams, the Hellina penciler, presents 27 pin-ups dedicated to the female figure (including Hellina, of course) in *The Art of Abrams* shipping in November for $3.50.

MARVEL COMICS

Doctor Strange learns the fate of the Avengers and FF in December's *Incredible Hulk* #450 by Peter David and Mike Deodato Jr.... The Black Panther is reintroduced in December's *Fantastic Four* #4.... Fop Mhan takes over as penciler in *Ghost Rider* #82 in December, which features the Devil Dinosaur and his lil' buddy Moon Boy.... *The Art of John Romita Sr.* ($34.95) is available in a hardcover edition which features a new cover by Romita Sr. The 96-page December book features never-been-seen artwork by Romita, an interview with him and reprints of back-to-back-to-back stories. *Incredible Hulk: Ghosts of the Past* ($12.95) is a 112-page trade paperback that reprints *Incredible Hulk* #397-#400, featuring the talents of Peter David, Dale Keown, Gary Frank, Chris Bachalo and others. Steve Englehart makes his Marvel debut in December's issue #19.... The entire "Onslaught" saga will be reprinted in six trade paperbacks this December, followed by *Onslaught: Epilogue*, which serves as an all-new last chapter to the "Onslaught" saga. This 32-page special tries to answer the question: Is the threat of Onslaught gone forever?.... December's *Star Trek: Mirror, Mirror* has Spock lead a mutiny on the U.S.S. Enterprise.

PENTHOUSE COMIX

Penthouse Man Adventure hits stands in January and will be a tribute to the 30th anniversary of "Star Trek," with pin-ups by Dave Dorman (who is also drawing the wraparound cover) and Mark Texeira.

SAMSON COMICS

Samson Comics opens the year with the release of *Samson '97*, which features a pin-up gallery of Samson characters drawn by Humberto Ramos, Greg Capullo, Billy Tucci and many others. And if that's not enough, Lou Ferrigno will pose on an exclusive photo cover edition as Samson!

TOP COW COMICS

Top Cow has postponed the release date of Brandon Peterson's *Arcanum* #1 to early 1997. The book will be re-solicited in 1997. W

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

In November, "Wizard World" gives you the EXCLUSIVE first look at the Nintendo 64 video game *Turok*. Log on and sample sounds and pictures of a game that will make 2000AD look tame. To get you psyched for the game release, we'll be giving away free copies of Acclaim's blistering new *Turok: The Empty Souls* comic.

Check out the new-and-improved interface on the Lobby section of "Wizard World." It's got groovy graphics and neato buttons. Like breathing, it's cool to be civilized.

Plus, this Jim Balent is meeting a million Catwomen, which is a prize for a lucky "Wizard World" fan. Keep your eyes peeled in the Contest section of "Wizard World."

Join our weekly e-mail list and keep up with "Wizard World" happenings and comic news. To get on the list, send an e-mail (blank "subject line") to wizlist@aol.com.

Call 800-754-4400 to hook up to "Wizard World" on America Online. You'll get free software and 15 hours of free online time. Signed: Wizard

CHAT SCHEDULES FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

MONDAY

• MANGA/ANIME
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
November 4, 18, 25 and December 2, 9, 23

• BREAKING IN Featuring: **David Campiti**
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
November 11 and December 16

• WILDSTORM
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 4, 18 and December 2, 16

• TOP COW
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 11, 25 and December 9

TUESDAY

• X-MEN TRIVIA Featuring: **X-Pert Benny Powell**
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
November 5, 12, 19, 26 and December 3, 10, 17

• *WIZARD* UNPLUGGED WITH REAL, LIVE FUNKY *WIZARD* EDITORS
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 5, 12, 19, 26 and December 3, 10, 17

WEDNESDAY

• ASTEROID X CLUB
Time: 6-7 p.m. (EST)
November 6, 13, 20, 27 and December 4, 11, 18

• TRIVIA CHAT Featuring: *Wizard* Freelancer Matt Brady
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
November 13, 27 and December 11

• AVENGERS ASSEMBLE
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 6, 13, 20, 27 and December 4, 11, 18

THURSDAY

• *INQUEST* CHAT Featuring: InQuest's **Rick Moscatello**
Time: 10-11 p.m. (EST)
November 7, 14, 21 and December 5, 12, 19

• MYSTERY GUEST Featuring: **Ruth Morrison & Mystery Guest**
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
November 14 and December 12

FRIDAY

• LOOP (LEGION OF OVERPOWER, MARVEL CCG)
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 1, 8, 15, 22 and December 6, 13, 20, 27

SATURDAY

• FANTASTIC FOUR CLUB
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
November 2, 9, 16, 23 and December 6, 13, 20, 27

SUNDAY

• SANDMAN100 COMIC BOOK CHAT
Time: 8-10 p.m. (EST)
Featuring: Don Lisk
November 3, 10, 17, 24 and December 7, 14, 21, 28

■ *Buddy Scalera (WizardTGTC@aol.com)*

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ing onslaught.The world's cities and country sides are in
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shelter from the never ending carnage and slaughter!

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rays, frost rays and shrinking rays that create earthquakes
and floods and tidal waves. The Martians let loose plagues
of giant flies and humongous spiders that search for and
destroy the earth's food supplies and livestock. They also
unleash legions of man-killing robots dedicated to finding
human beings in their hiding places.

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Would'ja believe the Image super heroes? But only if
they can just stop fighting amongst *themselves* that is!
Some characters will die! Some will change forever. All
the Image heroes will feel the lasting repercussions of
this unprecedented inter-company crossover. Not a hoax,
not a dream or an imaginary story, ***Mars Attacks Image***
is a mini-series that will alter the Image Universe
continuity forever!

GET READY FOR THE BIGGEST EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF IMAGE COMICS!

Mars Attacks Image is inspired by the 55 card trading set
first published by Topps in 1962. The gory, lurid illustrations
on the front of the cards echoed pulp magazine influences.
The backs of the cards serialized the story of the ruthless
alien invasion. The set was an instant hit with the nation's
children who eagerly embraced the ghastly subject matter.
But soon ***Mars Attacks*** cards were denounced by parents
and teachers and banned from the nation's backyards and
playgrounds and the ***Mars Attacks*** phenomenon faded from
the nation's collective memory. Forgotten for several
decades by all but a handful of non-sports card collectors,
Mars Attacks has resurfaced in the last several years to
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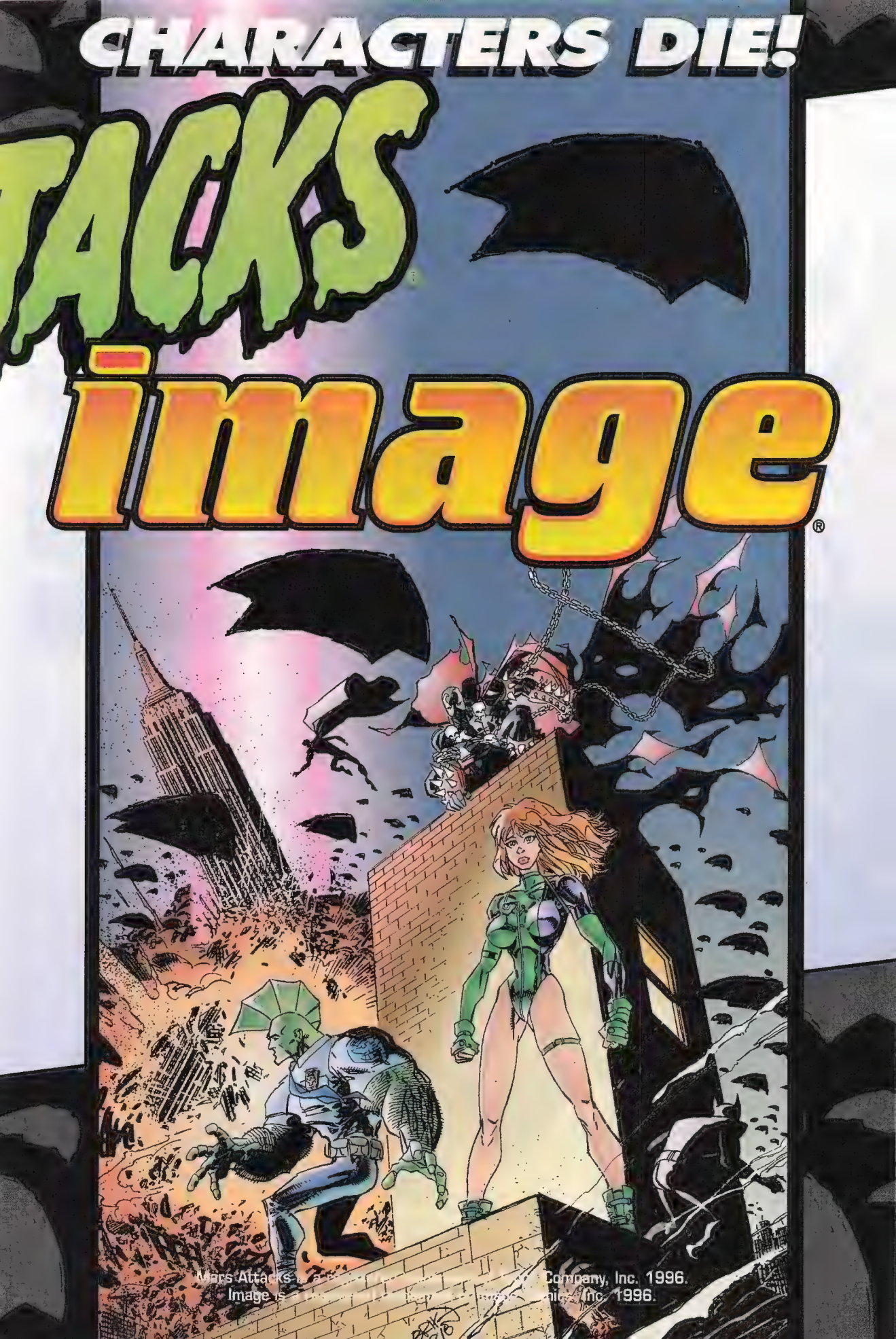
In recent years, ***Mars Attacks*** cards have inspired models,
sculptures, art portfolios and fan clubs. In fact, the ***Mars***
Attacks trading card set also serves as the inspiration for a
Tim Burton film with the same name starring Jack Nicholson
and and a star-studded cast scheduled for a December 1996
release. ***But be warned***—the greatest, most pulse-pounding
project ever inspired by the cards certainly will be the four
issue mini-series ***Mars Attacks Image!***

MARS ATTACKS IMAGE #1

4 ISSUE MINI-SERIES • STORY BY KEITH GIFFEN • ART BY ANDY SMITH AND BILL SIENKIEWICZ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HELL HATH NO FURY

CATCHING UP WITH SPAWN'S SEXIEST NEMESIS, ANGELA

BY SCOTT BEATTY

She's a hunter. A soldier. A messenger. And the nicest looking hundred-thousand-year-old you'll ever meet—providing you survive the first date.

Say hello to Angela, freelance angel and one of the best kept secrets to emerge from Todd McFarlane's Spawn Universe. With just a handful of appearances, Angela has become one of the most popular characters at Image—even *without* her own monthly title. And as far as McFarlane is concerned, that's just fine.

"If you start creating your Doctor Dooms and your Red Skulls and then spin them off into another magazine, you risk losing the characters' overall impact," argues McFarlane. "When we were younger, it became an event when Doctor Doom came back. But in the meantime, if Doctor Doom had his own monthly book in between his visits to the *Fantastic Four*, would it be a big deal? I want to save some elements for *Spawn* on some level—Angela's back *and* she's in *Spawn*...COOL!"

Angela made her first appearance way back in *Spawn* #9, an issue guest-scripted by *Sandman* creator Neil Gaiman, who introduced the character in a tale that gave *Spawn* readers a glimpse of one of the angels that populated Heaven. Where Spawn was a reluctant soldier-in-training for the forces of Hell, Angela was an equally deadly servant of light—a Priority A-1 angel clad in the scantiest of ribbons, and ready and willing to take Spawn down with her powerful lance. For readers, it is this bizarre "backwards" approach to good and evil that has fueled the appeal of both characters from day one.

"I created this concept where angels have to be pretty tough, and Neil gave life to all that," McFarlane says. "The angels have to be able to beat up all the psychotic killers that are sent to Hell for their sins. What's the rationale behind God sanctioning violence? What is the justification for that, given that [God's] supposed to be about peace and love? Why do we have these angel warriors, and why is it okay to have them? That's basically the story—why it's okay for angels to kill the enemy."

In *Spawn* #9, readers were treated to a flashback tale that showed Angela hunting a Medieval Spawn, just another in a long line of hapless souls caught up in the war between Heaven and Hell. Angela bested this hellspawn and took his emblem as one of her trademark earrings.

"JUST BECAUSE SOMEBODY'S POPULAR DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THAT WE HAVE TO SPIN THEM OFF INTO THEIR OWN MONTHLY TITLE"

TODD MCFARLANE

Later in the issue, leaping forward 800 years, Angela came back to Earth to hunt down Al Simmons, only this time she wasn't so tough. Spawn bested *her*. Thus, Angela fled—and Simmons very nearly wiped himself out of existence by mistakenly discharging Angela's deadly lance, "reconfiguring" all of reality.

For McFarlane, Angela's introduction was very much about setting up the perfect counterpoint to the reluctant Spawn. "I think she's more of a villain than Spawn is," he says, "given [in the series' context] that Spawn's the good guy and she's the bad guy. But that's only part of the story. Just because you come from Hell doesn't make you bad. And just because you're in Heaven doesn't make you a saint," offers McFarlane.

For all her troubles, Angela became the target of a frame-up by one of her own kind in the 1995 *Angela* mini-series, also written by Gaiman. This time around, the angel Gabrielle, director of Terran Affairs on Earth, attempted to destroy Angela. While hunting a nasty dragon on the bleak planet Sandalphon Five, Angela was captured by a host of angels and taken back to the crystal city Elysium in the realm of Heaven. There, she stood trial for treason, accused of hunting Spawn without a license and willingly giving over her lance to a hellspawn (which literally disappeared from reality following Spawn's activation of it). Spawn himself was brought to Elysium by Angela's friends in order to clear her. And there, Spawn discovered that Angela wasn't the only *femme fatale* in Heaven. In fact, Heaven was full of beautiful and deadly angels.

Before the three-issue mini-series was wrapped up, Angela took on nearly the whole of Elysium, eluding capture with Spawn inside the interdimensional folds of his cape—a dark little corner of Hell in which the pair shared a little "body heat." In the end, Spawn was returned to Earth and Angela forced Gabrielle to clear her name. Armed with a newly requisitioned lance, Angela decided to leave Heavenly politics behind and become a "freelance angel."

Since then, Angela has enjoyed her share of hardships and new adventures, most recently teaming with Glory in order to thwart the plans of her fellow angel Celestine. It seems, for some odd reason, Miss Celestine was driven mad after her death at the hands of the Violator (*Violator/Badrock*) and subsequent resurrection in the pages of *Angela/Glory: Rage of Angels #1*.

In the epic storyline that crossed the pages of *Youngblood* #6, *Team Youngblood*

#21, *Glory* #10 and *Maximage* #4, climaxing in *Glory/Angela: Angels in Hell* #1, Angela and Glory embarked on a bloody quest to save Heaven and Earth from Celestine's holy war. Along the way, the pair joined forces with two teams of Youngbloods and showed the young Maximage some warrior bonding while battling rogue angels, the risen dead and that nasty Malebolgia—who, readers later learned, engineered the whole Celestine mess himself in order to trash Heaven and overthrow Lucifer! Instead, the very civil Lucifer helped out Angela and Glory, returned Celestine's soul and even gave Angela a long, wet smooch—but don't tell Spawn!

At the climax of that last crusade, despite being offered a reprieve from Metatron, Heaven's toughest angel decided to remain a freelancer. And that leaves Angela's avid fans waiting for her next appearance, wherever that may be. McFarlane himself defers to collaborator Neil Gaiman for any future stories that reveal more insight into Angela's origins—as well as delving into just what transpired between Spawn and Angela during that romantic interlude. "I think that would be where Neil would pick up," says McFarlane. "He knows they had that moment. And I think he's got a story about what happened, if a seed was planted."

On the practical side, while McFarlane is busy with all things Spawn-related—the regular comic, the toy lines (including various Angela figures), an HBO animated series this winter and a movie next summer—Angela's dance card is awaiting a willing partner.

"I might bring her back into a storyline, but I don't have another mini-series or a monthly book planned," he says. "Depending on Neil's schedule, we may try to fit something in, but as of right now, I don't have anything on the drawing board. To me, she's just as interesting in the opposite way as Spawn is. There's a whole reason why angels do what they do, just like hellspawn do what they do. Somewhere along the line, I'd like to get the whole back story put in there—who she was before she died, and so forth."

For these revelations, Angela's fans will just have to be satisfied with the small bites that have helped make and keep her so popular in comics' current sea of Bad Girls. "Just because somebody's popular, doesn't necessarily mean that we have to spin them off into their own monthly title," McFarlane says. "We're doing that too much right now in our business. I think you have to keep people's interest baited. And that's one of the reasons why I've held her off. She's been popular for a long time. I'd rather show her to people every now and then and keep them interested for a long time. Probably the next time you see her, it'll be all of a sudden. I'll have a big splashy ad...*Spawn* #60, the return of Angela!"

Staffer Scott Beatty may spin off into his own book someday. But don't expect him to wear any of those skimpy little ribbon thingies.

Heavenly (and Hellish) Bodies

Here's a rundown of all the major players in the war between Heaven and Hell in the Spawniverse:

RIOT GIRLS

Gabrielle
Former Director of Terran Affairs, the angel Gabrielle was removed from Earthly duties following her role in framing Angela.

Callindra
Barely 200 years old, the young and inexperienced angel Callindra was appointed to defend Angela during her trial for treason.

Anahita and Kuan Yin
Angela's most trusted companions, the angels Anahita and Kuan Yin joined her as "freelance" angels following her trumped-up treason charges.

Celestine
Following her mad quest to destroy Heaven and Earth, Celestine's soul was returned to her and she has resumed her life as an angel.

Glory
Though Angela's unwilling ally at first, the Amazonian Glory helped defeat a Malebolgia-possessed Celestine, and the two are now fast friends.

Maximage
Granted mystic powers to protect the Earth, Maximage Lori Saunders aided Angela and Glory in their battle with Celestine.

Metatron
The supreme angel of Elysium, Metatron has been Angela's own "guardian angel," keeping her safe from angel reprisal and calling upon her as Elysium's last resort.

Tiffany
Seeking to top the former Priority A-1 angel Angela, the upstart Tiffany attempted to break all of Angela's records—including trying to take down Al Simmons. Expect these two to lock halos someday.

BOYS ON THE SIDE

Spawn/Al Simmons
As this century's hellspawn, Al Simmons is Angela's opposite number in Hell. Despite sharing a romantic interlude inside the interdimensional folds of his cloak, Angela would still rather "lance" Spawn if given the opportunity.

Malebolgia
Ruler of Hell's Eighth Level and creator of Spawn, the Malebolgia's plot to possess Celestine and overthrow Hell was put down by Lucifer himself—after Angela and Glory softened him up, of course.

Lucifer
First of the fallen angels and sovereign ruler of Hell, Lucifer ended the Celestine War, returning Celestine's soul to Angela and Glory. He even gave Angela a smooch, promising, "We shall meet again...sooner than you know!" ■ *SB*

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some seek vengeance.
they're just in it for kicks.
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CAN'T WALK
By Craig Shutt
©1994
wizard:TGTC #64

WITH THEMES LIKE SUICIDE, RAPE AND ALCOHOLISM, MARTIN WAGNER'S *HEPCATS* ISN'T YOUR TYPICAL FUNNY-ANIMAL BOOK

IT'S ABOUT TIME.

Martin Wagner has taken some seven years to publish 12 black-and-white issues of his critically acclaimed comic *Hepcats*. Now, following a new color #0 issue in November, the series begins monthly publication by Antarctic Press, giving the 30-year-old Wagner a new lease on creative life. And while die-hard fans of the serial epic about four characters with very human problems and very animal heads can rejoice that *Hepcats* has finally earned a regular schedule, new fans need not be disoriented. That's because Antarctic will be reprinting the 12 black-and-white issues Wagner self-published, before the new #13 continues the story. "*Hepcats* focuses on people that the readers can care about and relate to, rather than being pure escapism," says Wagner. "It's pretty much like real-life stuff, except everyone just happens to have animal heads."

Hepcats' current storyline is not one that most readers expected after the first couple of issues dealt with the college hijinks of four anthropomorphic friends. The book now centers on Erica, a topless dancer with a past, her sensitive boyfriend Arnie, his hormone-happy friend Joey and Joey's happy-go-lucky roommate Gunther.

After two low-key issues introducing the characters, #3 launched into the epic novel "Snowblind." Told by Erica in flashbacks, it focuses on her past life—a life involving child abuse, rape, suicide and alcoholism—which she's seriously put out of her mind. But when one of her relatives shows up, that "long-forgotten" past starts catching up with her. She tries to come to grips with that and the people reappearing in her life as Arnie looks on in frustration and Joey and Gunther try to provide support. A despondent Erica is recovering from some serious injuries as the story opens in *Hepcats* #3, while issue #11 eventually details exactly what happened to place her in the hospital.

The story's first half, issues #3-#10, were recently collected in "Snowblind, Part One," published by Wagner's own Double Diamond Press. It serves as the second volume in the Hepcats Reprint Library of trade paperbacks. (The first volume reprints Wagner's college strips, showing the origin and development of these characters and others before the comic series began in 1989.)

WAGNER HAS RECEIVED MUCH ACCLAIM for his emotional go-for-the-jugular edge in his stories, as well as his realistic dialogue, clean storytelling and detailed backgrounds. But he's also received some flak for putting animal heads onto human bodies. Anthropomorphic fans think if you're using animals, you should use their entire bodies, not just their heads, and each character's personality should stem from the animal they're representing. Gunther is a rhino, Joey is a lion, Arnie is a bear, and Erica—well, not even Wagner knows what animal she is. "She's an Erica," he explains. "It doesn't really matter what they are, because there's no relation to those animals' traits."

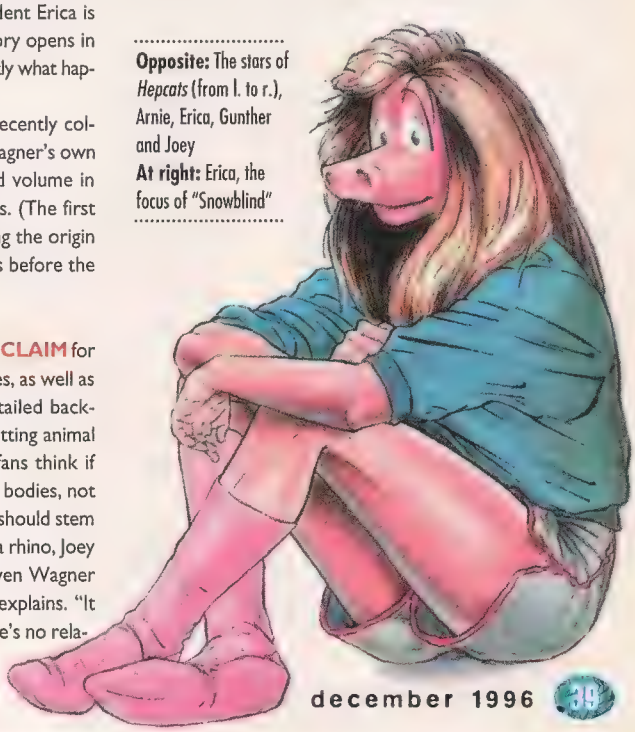
Hepcats developed from an early college strip Wagner drew at the University of Houston that used college mascots as characters. He liked the characters, so he kept them when he moved to the University of Texas at Austin and began "Hepcats" as a daily strip in its *Daily Texan* newspaper in 1987. Then he kept them for the comic after college.

"Every now and then I ask myself if I should have redesigned them as humans for the comic," he muses. "But I always end up deciding that it wouldn't be *Hepcats* anymore."

By using animal heads, readers can impress any person they know onto a character's body and personality, without Wagner's own visual ideas getting in the way. "*Hepcats* can be a unique reading experience for each person who reads it."

THE INTENSE FOCUS ON ERICA'S PAST provides a surprising direction, as Wagner admits he added her to the daily strip when he realized he didn't have any girls in the cast. "I decided to get to know Erica and explore her character," he explains. "When I started, I didn't fully appreciate how big it would all get. I wanted her to have a secret in her past, and I came up with the estrangement from her family and how that might haunt her. Then I started to explore how dark it might get, and I became fascinated by it."

Part of that fascination comes from Wagner's two-year marriage, which ended in 1991. His wife, a topless dancer from New Orleans, told him of a past that included sexual abuse and a twin sister, none of which Wagner could ever confirm. He also recounts in the introduction



Opposite: The stars of *Hepcats* (from l. to r.), Arnie, Erica, Gunther and Joey
At right: Erica, the focus of "Snowblind"

Wagner and "friends": his cat, along with Gunther (left) and Joey

to "Snowblind" how she once disappeared for six weeks without a trace. "It was a very bizarre experience, but fascinating too," he says now of the marriage. "I felt like I was two people, one who was living through this and one who was watching it happen. I felt like a spectator in my own life, marveling at what was going on."

Erica's troubles developed from that stew, but little of her or other characters are based on specific events, he says. "*Hepcats* is about 70 percent concocted in my head. Writing a graphic novel like this is a lot like detective work. You set up a situation and then you look for clues and gather evidence to reach the conclusion of how that situation developed. The characters seem to take on a life of their own, and you find yourself serving as the vessel that brings those stories into being."

Arnie and Joey take turns being his alter ego, he adds. "Sometimes I'm Joey—I definitely am in the next story arc," which will chronicle Joey's coming of age. (See sidebar.) "In 'Snowblind,' Arnie is more me. His hot-headedness and quick temper mirror a character flaw of my own, whereas Joey's irresponsibility and goofiness mirror another."

And then there's Gunther, full of common sense and serving as a sounding board. That, Wagner admits, makes him less a catalyst for stories. "I plan to do more with him, but I don't have a story that centers on him," he says. "I'm thinking of ending *Hepcats* with a story about Gunther, but I don't know when that might be. I don't think of *Hepcats* rigidly in terms of issues anymore; I think more in terms of what each graphic novel will be and when and where each one takes place. I don't want to get locked into a rigid schedule."

SCHEDULING HAS BEEN THE bane of Wagner's professional existence. His personal problems screwed him up in 1991, but otherwise all the delays have resulted from bad business planning. "Ideologically, I support self-publishing, but as a career, I just couldn't handle it," he admits. "I'm a bad businessman. I simply didn't have the money to print issues." That wasn't always the case, he stresses. Issues #1-#5 came out between July 1989 and May 1990. But it took five years for the next seven to arrive, as everything hit the fan.

Despite the problems, Wagner's glad he undertook the huge epic when he did. "If I hadn't taken the chance, I wouldn't have learned so much about writing and drawing. I think the second half of 'Snowblind' is much tighter and cleaner, and future stories will be even better. I became a better writer by tackling the big, meaty thing first and learning how to pare things down."

He's using the one-year delay until the reprinting catches up with new stories to get "way, way ahead," he emphasizes. "I'm sorry for my old readers who are disappointed by the delay, but this will work out in the long run," he says. "I'd like the old fans to see this as a chance [for me] to wipe the slate clean and maybe do things the way they should have been done in the first place. And I'd like new fans to say this is their chance to check out this cool book they've heard about and never saw. I hope it gives lots of people a chance to discover *Hepcats* for the first time and maybe be surprised by it."

Craig Shutt, who also reports on The Dark Knight Returns *this issue, has dated some arguably anthropomorphic women.*

What's Ahead

Antarctic Press begins its *Hepcats* run in November with issue #0, a full-color, never-before-printed story that follows the four friends in their college days. "It takes place right after Erica joined the group," Wagner explains. "It's a slice-of-life story that introduces them to new readers and gives old readers a new look at them. Color is something I've always wanted to do, and it looks stunning."

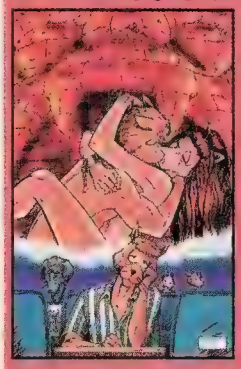
In December, the title begins the monthly black-and-white reprinting of the existing 12 issues with new color covers. Space originally devoted to letters pages in each will be filled with a new story that forms a prologue for a future long storyline starring Joey. Those short chapters will be collected into one edition, Wagner emphasizes, so longtime fans won't need to buy the reprints.

When the reprinting catches up with Wagner's self-published issues in a year, *Hepcats* continues with "Snowblind." In issue #13, Erica relives the years after she left her family at 16 and went to New Orleans to become a topless dancer.

When "Snowblind" ends in #20, Wagner plans on taking a small breather to work on other projects, including some nonanthropomorphic stories. "That way I'll be fresh when I start the new story," he says. "Readers think I can't draw people, and I'd like to show them differently," he says.

When he returns to *Hepcats*, he hopes to do some four- or five-issue stories focusing on pivotal moments in the characters' lives. "These will show dramatic, transitional stages for each of them, when they have to break with the past or try something new," Wagner says.

After those play out, he'll launch into Joey's story. Called "Way of the World," it follows Joey as he drops out of college to find himself. "Whereas Erica's story delved into her past, Joey's helps him find a future. Things will happen to his family and his personal life that keep him from finding a direction," he explains. "He'll feel rootless and go on a quest to find some roots and make something of his time on Earth." The story is shaping up to be even longer than "Snowblind," he notes, and could run 25 issues. Clearly, Wagner is making no small plans for the future. CS



Joey is the focus of the next storyline

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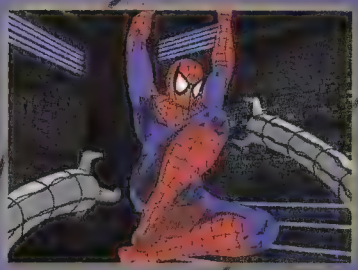

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LIFE AFTER

BY BRIAN CUNNINGHAM

IMAGE

ROB LIEFELD PONDERS THE FUTURE AFTER LEAVING THE COMPANY HE HELPED FOUND, IMAGE COMICS

The solution is simple: Spend a day with Rob Liefeld and find out what the hell is going on.

Just one week earlier I had received a call from Liefeld at 7:30 a.m., telling me in a shaken voice that he was resigning from Image Comics, the company he helped co-found five years earlier. Liefeld seemed subdued—almost contrite—a far cry from the outspoken, controversial persona I've come to associate with him.

So here I am tooling down the Palisades Parkway at 65 mph, my brain whirring almost as fast, apprehensively thinking about what the next few hours will hold. The tough list of questions jotted down on the yellow legal pad on my lap doesn't make me feel any easier.

At the wheel is *Wizard* Managing Editor Joe Yanarella, who helps me organize the line of questioning as we make the 45 minute trip into Manhattan, where we're scheduled to meet Liefeld at Forbidden Planet, a comic store at 13th Street and Broadway.

The formal setting is a first-day signing of Liefeld's *Captain America* #1—the first book in his one-year "Heroes Reborn" deal with Marvel. The mood should be festive, marking his return to Marvel Comics, the company where he became a superstar building his name on

New Mutants and *X-Force*.

But the black cloud of Liefeld's recent resignation, and his unwillingness to divulge specifics about it, hangs over the event—at least in our minds.

It is almost noon when we arrive at Forbidden Planet, the signing an hour old. We enter to see Liefeld sitting behind the front counter signing various comics, hardly wearing the clothing of a superstar: a brown T-shirt, blue jeans and navy blue sneakers, with his flannel shirt hanging on the back of his chair. Appropriately, on his right is his right-hand man, Matt Hawkins, head of marketing for Liefeld's Extreme Studios. Rounding off Liefeld's crew is *Kid Supreme* artist Dan Fraga, who floats around the store looking at comics.

We exchange pleasantries and at Hawkins' invitation we go behind the counter to sit with Liefeld as he signs. The line for autographs isn't long, but steady. Steady enough for Liefeld to have time to chat with each fan and critiquing art portfolios in detail.

The next fan in line approaches the counter. "When are you gonna go back and do 'Hawk and Dove'?"

Liefeld shifts into fanboy gear. "Whoa! You know what? I'm going to DC (Comics) tomorrow to see if I can do something with Hawk and Dove. I'd like to do a two-part Superman/Hawk and Dove story. I'm trying to convince them to do something."

As the signing line lulls, Liefeld passes time by sketching his Diehard character on a plain sheet of white paper. Time to squeeze in some questions.

It's still early in the day. I decide to keep the topics light. I start with the *New Mutants*, jumping on something Liefeld told a fan earlier. Is he interested in returning to the book?

"It's just an idea I had," he admits. "Obviously, I've been thinking about this 'Heroes Reborn' thing for a long time. There's this whole new world that Jim (Lee) and I are the architects of, and I was just thinking the other day the title 'New Mutants' would be appropriate for an X-Men book in 'Heroes Reborn' because they would be the first mutants in that world. I don't think I'll have much of a problem twisting people's arms to do a book called *New Mutants*."

The topic turns to *The Avengers*, and Liefeld's enthusiasm is on the rise.

"It's got a '60s vibe to it with, like, a '90s execution," says Liefeld. "*Captain America* is like a big conspiracy book, and it's very serious. *The Avengers* is just (*face lights up, arms get all animated and deepens his voice*) 'Avengers Assemble! Let's go kick ass!' That's the book that I'm most anxious to put out."

I tell Liefeld that I've always been an Avengers guy.

"Don't even get me started!" Liefeld says, his face beaming with a big smile. "That was the best book when I was a kid. Do you remember the issue where Ant-Man took them all on...? That was the (slaps hands together) best issue! I still remember just freaking out over that one."

The signing ends at around 2:30. Joe leaves for his car, as I get to ride back to the Wizard Press HQ in a limousine with Team Extreme. Fraga gets in front as I scrunch into the back seat between Hawkins and Liefeld. Before we take off, Liefeld asks if anyone else is hungry and has Fraga get him a large french fries at the McDonalds on the corner. He eats them as we head north on the Harlem River Drive.

The talk then turns serious.

You're one week removed from your resignation from Image. Can you explain what led up to this? Why did you resign?

You know, I sense that people want something more satisfying than what they've been given. I just know that Image—and please don't read anything into this—had felt uncomfortable with me for the last, maybe, six weeks to two months. We put the resignation out to show people that we hold everyone at Image in very high regard. And the separation will, hopefully, be as comfortable as possible. We've made the decision and we'll live with it.

We learned there was a meeting to, among other things, discuss your future status within Image. Were you aware of this?

Not immediately. I was aware there was a meeting...I was made aware that there were several meetings that I was not aware of. But the details of the meeting you just described were not known to me. I had been holding off [resigning] for the better part of 10 days. I had let the other partners at Image know that I was resigning 10 days before I put the thing into play. I have not inquired as to what that meeting they had was about. I received a press release 24 hours later that was confusing, stating that they had booted me out.

"I JUST KNOW THAT IMAGE...HAD FELT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH ME FOR THE LAST SIX WEEKS TO TWO MONTHS."

Is there any one guy within Image that you're closer with than any other?

It's weird. I [*pause*] feel close to all of them. It was important to me that they were all at my wedding.

The one I had the least amount of communication with over the years is Marc Silvestri. Not that there's been a good relationship or a bad relationship, there's just been no relationship.

When you announced your resignation, there was an odd sense of humility. Usually, when people think of Rob Liefeld, they think of an opinionated guy who comes out guns a-blazing. This is a little strange to take in.

I think if I have to defend myself, I am capable and eager to do it most of the time. But for the better part of the last year, with all the shots I've been taking just on the "Heroes Reborn" deal, I chose to sit idly. I didn't say anything for about nine months. And then I just did an interview [responding to critics]. I've chosen to focus on my work in the last year.

I'm much more comfortable talking about something creative than I am talking about a resignation. People have described it as a divorce and I think there's validity in describing it that way. You can either have an ugly divorce or an amicable divorce and I'm hoping for the most amicable divorce possible.

When you formed the independent-of-Image publishing house Maximum Press a couple of years ago, did you foresee a break from Image?

No, Maximum Press was formed for me so that I can have something of my own in case anything went wrong—or just for new opportunities. With Maximum Press I felt very strongly that a book like *Battlestar Galactica* shouldn't have an Image "i" on it because you're gonna inevitably get mail asking when Battlestar Galactica is gonna meet Spawn or the Image Earth. I am very thankful that I have Maximum Press and that I don't have to start from the ground up. Maximum Press was not created to compete with Image Comics, I think that needs to be clear. Now we are discussing whether Maximum Press should be a tiny company or if there should be a new company formed.

It seems like it's almost 99 percent certain that Marc Silvestri will return to Image—is this a slap in the face? He's practically said he left because of a clash with you.

No, I don't consider it a slap. I think it's necessary that Marc comes back. And I don't know if I can fully explain that. [*sighs*]...I read all the interviews and was kinda confused at the fact that he was pointing at me. And to this day, I have not been given a reason why the finger-pointing was going on. Again, Marc and I have had no conversations beforehand or after. I was certainly made the scapegoat immediately and I've been as confused and hurt by it from day one.

Now that your studio is no longer at Image, does this free you up to do

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work for other companies?

I'm having such a good time doing the Marvel stuff that I'll consider doing more stuff with them. But I feel characters like Shaft and Badrock tapping me on the shoulder, saying "Hey, remember us? Come back here!" So I don't know how much more I can stay away from them.

Y'know, there are things...[*smiles*] I love Star Wars. I love Superman. I love the Legion of Super-Heroes. I love the Teen Titans. You dangle those characters in front of me, it's gonna be hard to say no [*laughs*]. I would love to do a Luke Skywalker story with Boba Fett in it. Certainly I'd like to map out my schedule where I can do a little of everything.

Is it still fun to just sit down and draw a comic book?

[*smiles from ear to ear, his head leaning against the door window*] It's never been better. I love drawing comic books. That's my favorite thing to do. Even when the deadlines suck and there's so much pressure. Man, it's when you're finishing a page when the emotions run.

The car pulls up to *Wizard* HQ at 3:45 to be greeted by *Wizard* publisher Gareb Shamus, who gives Liefeld, Hawkins and Fraga the nickel tour of the joint. When the three of them get to my office, I sit Liefeld down on the couch. The interrogation continues.

By leaving Image, how do you think the fans will react? Will they even care?

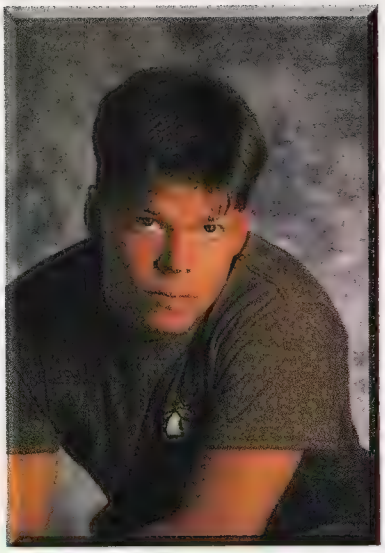
I don't know whether they'll care or not. I've seen very little proof that an Image fan still exists. I think that there's either a Jim Lee fan or WildStorm fan or Extreme fan. I think there's a lot of segregation already in the marketplace.

If you could change any one thing about your tenure at Image, what would it be?

[*pauses*] The first year's worth of books. Completely. The fact that I took so long to put out the first four issues of *Youngblood*. The fact that *Brigade* was not...well, I wouldn't have published that first mini-series, the artist wasn't ready at the time. I think in the haze I honestly didn't see it. If somebody said to me, "How could you not see it?" I don't know, but I didn't.

I'm proud of the early issues of *Supreme*. I think those were the best things to come out of the first year. But I would definitely go back to the first year and have worked harder. That first year haunts me to this day. It haunts me.

One thing I'd like to cover is the controversy that surrounds you. I can tell it makes you uncomfortable to talk about.



Yeah, it kinda is. Why do *you* think I'm controversial?

Well, you say some things that cause people to react.

Look, I get very excited about comics. When I go to a comic book store, I gotta grab them all, like they're gonna disappear. And sometimes I probably say things without thinking them through. And I think the older I get, the more I'll choose my words better. There have been times in the past where I've felt that I'm the authority on something only to find out that I didn't know squat.

Liefeld is late. No stranger to the predicament, but this time it's not his fault. After a brief photo shoot done in a makeshift studio, Liefeld is off schedule for his 5 p.m. signing at Wizard World, a store 15 minutes away in Nanuet, N.Y. The same crew that arrived at Wizard Press now race for the store. We continue our talk en route.

Here's a chance for you to defend yourself. There have been charges made against you, and I'd like you to respond to them. It's been said you sometimes use ghost artists on your artwork.

Never. Period. You know what? There's nothing that offends me more. If my name's on it, you better believe I drew it. I did something to it. Period.

Some say you are difficult to work with.

Difficult in what way? I don't know how to answer that. I know that from Jo Duffy to Chris Sprouse to Bob Fleming who have told us that Extreme has been the most pleasurable experience in their comics careers. That they've never been treated better, they've never had more fun. There are people I will always be confused by, that I know we paid better than anybody in the business and they have axes to grind with us.

Sometimes you just throw your hands up in the air. It's frustrating.

We arrive at the store at 5:30 with fans lined up outside the door awaiting his arrival. Liefeld doesn't miss a beat and continues the conversation. Like a man on a mission he enters the store striding straight to the X-Men part of the comic racks. He picks up an issue of *Wolverine*, pointing to a signature on the cover. "Chris Leitner–he's been coloring for us for two years," he says. "Now he's doing a ton of work for Marvel's X-office. You see this?" pointing to another issue of *Wolverine*. "That's Anthony Winn." Picks up an issue of *X-Factor*. "Jeff Matsuda? Born and bred by Extreme Studios. These guys go from here to the X-Men. Danny Miki, a born and bred guy at Extreme, went off to Todd to ink *Spawn*.

"I have awesome talent. And for all those names, there are people we have now that companies would love to pick up."

While Rob starts signing, the threesome start eating the Taco Bell waiting for them at the store. I chat with Hawkins while playing the nearby "Twister" pinball game. The signing ends at around 7:45 p.m. I'm on my last ball when Liefeld walks over. "Hey, we're on such a roll," he says, "do you want to ask me any more questions?"

Well, since he asked...

Where do you see yourself in a year?

Whoa! [*laughs*] I can't even think that far ahead! I'll be drawing comics, I hope. Y'know, I couldn't even have predicted this last year to you. Not even close. So I have no idea where I'll be.

You're the guy that everyone loves to hate.

I...ignite a lot of passion with people. And I don't know why. No one's told me why. I have theories. For years, [friends] told me it's because I'm young and successful. And I didn't believe it. I said, "*That's* not it!" But y'know what? As I approach 30, I look back at how young I was—Image was formed when I was 23—and I think I am able to crawl into these guys' heads now. And some of those guys must've thought I was the biggest punk to walk the face of the earth.

"Hey, man, could you get me a gumball?" Liefeld asks Hawkins, who obliges. R.E.M. is on the radio as the two of us walk back over to the comic book racks and scan the new comics that shipped the day before, *Captain America* #1 among them.

It was close to 9 o'clock, and Liefeld calls it a night, getting ready to prepare for his next day trip to Washington D.C., the last signing date on this four-day tour. As we were walking out, I say, "Y'know, I wouldn't be surprised to see an Image 'i' back on your books sometime down the road." He takes a step back, looks up to the sky, laughs and rolls his head backwards. "Y'know, I wouldn't be surprised either," he smiles. "I've seen some really weird things happen in this industry, and I wouldn't be the least bit surprised." W

Brian Cunningham is also uncomfortable with the controversy surrounding himself. He blames those blasted midgets and the bottle of Dr. McGillicuddie's.

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Wizard casts the original Star Trek crew

Casting Call

This month's "Casting Call" is a bit of a departure. Instead of choosing actors to play comic characters in a movie, we're re-casting the original "Star Trek" crew! With modern versions of TV shows like "The Brady Bunch" and "The Addams Family" being done, why not do it with "Trek"? Just think—with some help from ILM, the original *Enterprise* (Lookin' better than ever!) would be back in space with an updated version of the original cast. Sounds like a sure-fire hit to us! But who could fill the shoes of the original cast? Well, glad you asked…

CAPT. JAMES T. KIRK

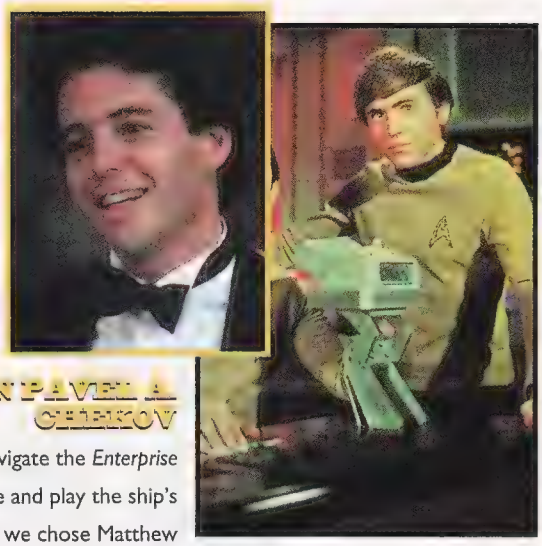
Playing Kirk, the brash captain of the *Enterprise*, wouldn't be hard at all for Bruce Boxleitner ("Babylon 5"). He's got that "I'm a ladies man and I know it" look about him just like Shatner did, as well as some previous outer space experience.

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

LT. HIKARU SULU

We couldn't ask for more than to have Jason Scott Lee ("Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story") sitting in the helmsman's chair, playing the role of Mr. Sulu.



ENSIGN PAVEL A. CHEKOV

To help navigate the *Enterprise* through space and play the ship's eager beaver, we chose Matthew Broderick ("The Cable Guy"). All he's gotta do is throw on a Russian accent and he'd be perfect.

DR. LEONARD "BONES" McCOY

Gary Sinise ("Forrest Gump," "Apollo 13") has exactly what it takes for the role of "Bones" McCoy—the dispassionate look of a doctor, and a cool-sounding voice for all those "Dammit, Jim…" lines.

LT. SPOCK

The ever-logical Vulcan Mr. Spock must be played by someone with a superior air about him. We think Billy Zane ("The Phantom") could pull this off, no problem.

LT. COMMANDER MONTGOMERY SCOTT

Hey, if Mike McGlone ("The Brothers McMullen") can do the Scottish accent, we've got us a sure thing for the role of Scotty, the thin Chief Engineer.

KHAN

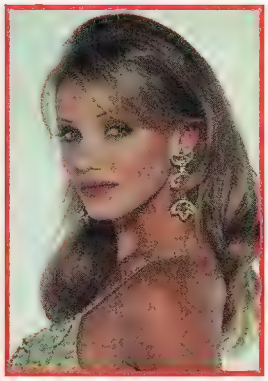
Khan, the man who very nearly destroyed the *Enterprise* and despises Kirk above all others, could only be played by one man—Armand Assante ("Judge Dredd").

LT. NYOTA UHURA

For the role of Uhura, we needed someone beautiful, who won't look stupid with a gigantic microphone sticking out of her ear. Holly Robinson ("21 Jump Street") would fit the role of communications officer perfectly.

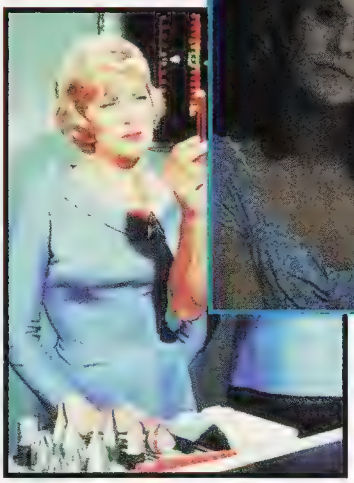
NURSE CHRISTINE CHAPEL

Meg Ryan ("Courage Under Fire") has got the energy and look to play Dr. McCoy's assistant perfectly. And seeing her in one o' those short "Star Trek" skirts wouldn't be too bad, either. W



YEOMAN JANICE RAND

As for the beautiful and sexy Yeoman Rand (mmmmm...), we needed a gorgeous blonde babe and someone who could fill out a "Trek" uniform quite nicely. Cameron Diaz ("The Mask") fits the bill wonderfully.



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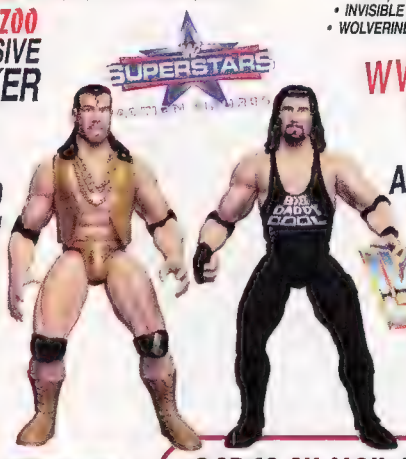

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THUNDERBOLTS

Marvel fills the post-'Onslaught' void this fall with a new team of superheroes

IF YOU WERE LIVING IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE, how safe would you feel knowing your life now depended on The Hulk or the X-Men? But with the Fantastic Four and the Avengers apparently gone for good, you don't have much choice. At least, you didn't until the Thunderbolts arrived.

"These are the guys who step up to the plate when the Avengers and FF disappear," says Kurt Busiek, who will write the team's new ongoing series, with Mark Bagley (*Amazing Spider-Man*) penciling. It kicks off with a double-sized first issue in February, but the team makes its debut in November within the pages of *Incredible Hulk* #449 by Peter David and Mike Deodato Jr. They'll also appear in December's *Marvel Universe Quarterly* #1 by Busiek and Bagley.

The team assembles behind a man known as Citizen V, a master strategist, swordsman and hand-to-hand fighter. Seeing the need for a supergroup that can reassure and protect the public, he recruits five other members:

- **Meteorite**, his second in command, who can fly, has super-strength and shoots power blasts from her hands
- **Atlas**, who can grow to giant size
- **Techno**, a swashbuckling mechanical and cybernetic genius
- **Songbird**, who uses her vocal powers to create solid structures out of sound
- **Mobile Armored Cybernetic Harness One (M.A.C.H. One)**, who wears a skin-tight suit with the attributes of a fighter jet, including flight and sophisticated weaponry

With the writer behind *Astro City* and *Marvels* at the controls, you know there'll be more to this team's stories than your basic slugfests. Busiek says he'll examine how fame and public approval affect heroes who have never acted heroic before. "These are disparate people with different reasons for signing up," he explains. "They've just been thrust into the spotlight, and the fame and public approval they receive will have a strong psychological effect on them."

Busiek and editor Tom Brevoort admit there are some wrinkles planned for this team that they won't discuss just yet. "What we have in mind for these guys will unfold before the eyes of the readers very quickly," Busiek says.

Adds Brevoort, "I think readers who pick up the first issue of the ongoing series in February will want to stick around for more."

Craig Shutt, who wrote about Batman: The Dark Knight Returns *elsewhere in this issue, knows the Avengers and FF aren't really dead. But try telling that to the Black Widow.*

BY CRAIG SHUTT

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Citizen V, Meteorite, Techno, Atlas, Songbird and M.A.C.H. One

WHAT?
Thunderbolts

DEBUT?
The Incredible Hulk #449 in November (they will star in their own monthly series beginning in February)

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Meet the newest group of superheroes to pick up the slack left in the Marvel Universe with the Avengers and Fantastic Four gone.

THIS PAGE: Bagley's design sketches of Citizen V (above) and Meteorite

OPPOSITE: (clockwise from top left) Songbird, Atlas, Techno, Citizen V, Meteorite and M.A.C.H. One

SPIDER SENSE

Marvel listens to the fans ... and kills Spider-Man

BY MATTHEW BRADY

Spider-Man is back. Again. Over the last two years, Spider-Man fans have had to deal with the revelation that the hero that they'd known and loved for the past 20 years was actually a clone of the real McCoy. Boy, that didn't sit too well with anyone! In a reader-induced about-face, the clone is gone, and the true Peter Parker has reclaimed the mantle of Spider-Man. Let the party begin!

"It should've been a six-month storyline," Spider-Man group editor Ralph Macchio says about the Clone Saga. "It was supposed to bring Ben Reilly in as the new Spider-Man, and let Peter and Mary Jane exit gracefully. But there was such an unanticipated backlash from the readers, that changes had to start midstream to bring Peter back as Spider-Man. What I can say now is that we've heard from the readers, we know where we went astray a little and now we're coming back to making Spider-Man what he should be. People who loved Spider-Man before the clone came along are going to love him again."

In a nutshell, the Clone Saga went something like this. The Jackal, a Spidey villain from way back, created a clone of Peter Parker in *Amazing Spider-Man* #149, which shipped in 1975. At the end of that story, it appeared to everyone involved (including readers) that the clone was *dead, dead, dead*. However, everyone was *wrong, wrong, wrong*.

The clone, who took the name Ben Reilly (after Peter's Uncle Ben, adding his Aunt May's maiden name "Reilly"), was alive, and recently resurfaced, claiming that he was the original Spider-Man and Peter Parker was the clone. Peter Parker, his pregnant wife Mary Jane and most Spider-Man readers went slightly nuts at the revelation. The storyline caused many trials and tribulations to reverberate through the Spider-books, including Peter and Mary Jane leaving and later returning to New York, Peter losing and later regaining his Spider-powers, and clinical tests taking place that conclusively proved Peter to be the clone. Finally, Peter, Mary Jane, and Ben thought their lives would settle down. Not quite.

Last month, their calm lives ended with the four-part "Revelations" storyline. The story featured the return of Norman Osborn, the original Green Goblin. (Don't

"People wanted a resolution [of the Clone Saga], and we all knew it was going to involve deaths."

—Ralph Macchio
EDITOR OF THE SPIDER-MAN TITLES

feel left out...*everyone* thought he was dead.) Turns out that Osborn, who had been building a criminal empire in Europe, was behind all the clone shenanigans in one way or another. The switched lab test results, the other clones who kept showing up, the seemingly random problems Peter had...Osborn had his hands in everything.

In his attempt to destroy Parker's life, Osborn arranged for Mary Jane's baby to be switched at birth with a dead infant, so the Parkers would believe their child was stillborn. Macchio essentially allows the readers to decide whether the real Parker baby is dead or alive, with plans to revisit this plotline. Meanwhile, everyone Peter held dear gathered at the *Daily Bugle* offices, all summoned by a mysterious invitation sent by Osborn for a Halloween party set up to kill them all. Ben realized the Goblin's plan and headed to the offices to stop him. But the Goblin proved too much for him.

Ben died, impaled on the Goblin's glider, and suffered clone degeneration, proving that Peter was the original item. Enraged, Peter attacked the Goblin, and the two entered a fiery final confrontation that the Green Goblin apparently didn't survive. Limping from the battle, Peter Parker resumed the role of the one, true Spider-Man.

" 'Revelations' had a lot of heavy, heavy stuff in it," Macchio admits. "But it all had to come to this. People wanted a resolution, and we all knew it was going to involve deaths."

So, with all that behind you, where do you go next? Glad you asked.

While Peter Parker will be returning to the role of Spider-Man, Macchio is quick to point out that the end of the Clone Saga won't simply amount to the "reset" button being pushed on Spider-Man, resulting in a return to the fun-filled days before the clone reared his identical head. Despite the wishes of some readers, no one is going to wake up and realize the whole clone storyline was a dream. "Peter and Mary Jane will cope with their losses," Macchio says. "They will deal with it. Losing Ben and the baby won't be something that we'll just wash our hands of, and say, 'Whew. Glad that's over.' In terms of the Marvel Universe, these two are real people, and they will remember the loss of a baby and a 'brother.' But, they will get support and strength to go on from one another and the people around them, and move on with their lives.

"People have said, 'Why don't you go back to the happy go-lucky Spider-Man who swings around cracking jokes?' What they fail to real-

ize is that this guy has never had a happy-go-lucky life. He became Spider-Man out of guilt and responsibility, because he failed to save his uncle's life. He's never going to let that happen again, so he's always had a sense of guilt about him, along with a hint of obsession. But at the same time, ironically, Peter uses Spider-Man as a sort of anchor to hold on to his sanity when Peter Parker's life gets rough."

While Spidey may not be strictly laughs and giggles from here on out, Macchio says that the books will lighten up a bit. "I was really tired of the self-absorbed Spider-Man stories," Macchio says. "We're going to loosen things up just a bit. Peter and Mary Jane will be moving back to Manhattan, with both of them going to Empire State University." Macchio says. "Peter will teach, Mary Jane will be a student. And we're going to make them appear a little younger since MJ won't be pregnant anymore. Overall, we're going to be telling fresh, exciting stories."

Adding to the renewed feel of the Spider-books is the facelift that all the books got as part of the "Revelations" storyline, including new logos on all the books, and the (adjectiveless) *Spider-Man* book officially renamed *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* to reflect the return of Peter Parker as Spidey.

Along with their new look, Macchio revealed that no more crossovers are scheduled between the books for the foreseeable future. Put simply, the stories will stay in their own books. A reader who follows *Sensational Spider-Man* won't have to buy every Spider-book that month just to follow a story.

"You'll be able to read *Sensational*, and get a good feeling for what's going on in the whole Spider-Man Universe without being compelled to read say, *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Peter Parker* or *Spectacular*," Macchio says. "I wanted it to be this way, because I felt that readers were being forced to follow storylines throughout all four books, and that wasn't what they wanted."

Since the four monthly Spider-Man books feature different creative teams, Macchio feels that each book should have its own feel and style. "I want to have each of the books to be a shade different from the others in the way they present their stories. *Sensational* will be a little lighter than the others, something that really fits well with Mike Wieringo's wonderful art, while *Spectacular* will be a touch darker, and that will fit with [J.] Marc DeMatteis' writing and Luke Ross' pencils."

Here's what's coming up in the Spider-books in the next few months:

Peter Parker: Spider-Man

(Howard Mackie, John Romita Jr. and Scott Hanna)

"*Peter Parker* will be our crime book, and will feature a lot of the organized crime material that John loves to draw and Howard loves to write, including the return of Hammerhead to a position of respect in New York's organized crime scene. We'll be using this book to introduce a new character called Shock who actually will be a new hero, and may become a part of the Spider-Man mythos."

Macchio also revealed that the Kingpin will return in the pages of *Peter Parker* as well. The story of Kingpin's return will feature a trip to the rough-and-tumble island nation of Madripoor, and guest-star the master of kung-fu, Shang Chi. Shang Chi's appearance in *Peter Parker* will tie in with his appearances in the X-Men books as well.

Also in *Peter Parker*, readers will see a return of the Stacy family. Perhaps no other deaths in comics stunned readers as much as those of Captain Stacy (*Amazing Spider-Man* #90), and his daughter (and Peter's girlfriend) Gwen in *Amazing Spider-Man* #121.

"Arthur Stacy, the brother of Captain Stacy, has never been satisfied with the official reports of his brother's or his niece Gwen's death," Macchio says. "For Arthur, the recent reappearance of the Green Goblin reawakened an obsession with Spider-Man, and a desire to find out the truth once and for all. He'll bring his son and daughter with him from England, and will start looking into matters on his own. While he's investigating, his children will enter ESU, where they'll encounter Peter, Gwen's old boyfriend, which will provide an interesting connection between the families."

Spectacular Spider-Man

(J. Marc DeMatteis, Luke Ross and John Staniscl)

"The weirder side of Spider-Man," Macchio says of *Spectacular*. "Marc is going to be looking at some of the more weird and mystical elements of Spider-Man's world in *Spectacular*. Of all the books, this one will have a more philosophical bent."

The Spidey creative teams will welcome him back by returning his old rogue's gallery

Friendly Neighborhood New Guys

When you're talking to two of the newest artists on the Spider-books about their jobs, it's easy to forget that these guys are talking about work.

Mike Wieringo (*Sensational Spider-Man*) and Steve Skroce (*Amazing Spider-Man*) both think their new assignments rock. Case in point: Talk to Steve Skroce about Spider-Man, and he can't go for very long without uttering a Homer Simpson-esque, "Mmmm... Spidey." These are their dream jobs.

What are the guys' takes on Spider-Man? "I prefer the more classic Spider-Man, in the style of Steve Ditko and John Romita Sr.," Wieringo says. "He still had lots of graceful lines and wild poses when he was drawn by Romita, but they seemed very realistic. I'm not a fan of the 'broken-hip' Spider-Man, where he has his knees way up over his head, and things like that. Although strictly speaking, he's not a normal human being. There are some rules of anatomy he has to follow."

"He's going to be an acrobat," Skroce says. "I want to do a little more choreography, especially in his action sequences. I don't want to do any more 'Guy jumps on other guy, first guy punches second guy' action sequences. I want it to be like Jackie Chan times 10, and just a little more funky."

Both artists cite Spider-Man's rogues gallery as something that they're itching to get their artistic hands on as well. "Venom would be cool to draw, but I really don't like the slobbering version of him lately," Wieringo says. "I really like original, old-man Vulture, and the Shocker is one of my all-time favorite villains."

Skroce's list is a little longer. "What do I want to draw while I'm on *Amazing*? Everything," Skroce responds. "I want to re-design Electro. I can't wait to draw Venom, the Lizard, Doc Ock, Mysterio, the Rhino and all the other classic bad guys."

Both artists summed up their new assignments in a similar fashion. "It's just a fun book," Wieringo says. "Everything about Spidey is just... fun. Hopefully that feel will come through my art."

"Spidey's just the coolest," Skroce says. "That's all I can say." ■ MB

As the first regular Spider-Man book following the conclusion of "Revelations," *Spectacular* #241 will put Spidey up against the first villain he ever faced, The Chameleon. "It will be a very demented, Marc DeMatteis-style story," Macchio says. "That story will be followed by the return of the Jack O' Lantern, and then Marc's going to be playing with some of the sillier Spider-Man villains from the past, including the Kangaroo and The Grizzly."

Amazing Spider-Man

(Tom DeFalco, Steve Skroce and Bud LaRosa)

"*Amazing* is really going to reflect Peter Parker's life," Macchio says. "It's going to be unpredictable. Something that is coming up is the introduction of a new character, the Black Tarantula, who will appear to have been a part of the Marvel Universe for years, since everyone knows all about his adventures. But this may or may not be true. We'll also be bringing the original Doctor Octopus back in the pages of *Amazing*—arms and all."

DeFalco agrees. "We'll be introducing new characters and play with the old ones that we knew...or thought we knew. We'll be introducing a lot of new elements in a very classic-feeling way," he says.

"My view of *Amazing Spider-Man* is that it should be the most accessible of the Spider-Man books," DeFalco continues. "It should be a book that someone can just pick up and read without having ever read a Spider-Man book before. With any luck, and if we're doing our job, they'll desperately want to read another."

Sensational Spider-Man

(Todd DeZago, Mike Wieringo and Richard Case)

"I want *Sensational* to be a little bit lighter, and that fits with Mike's art," Macchio says.

Sensational writer Todd DeZago expresses a similar sentiment. "The emphasis is going to be on fun," DeZago says. "Mike and I are so excited that we don't have to do brooding, deep, emotional stories and can just have fun."

DeZago's plans following "Revelations" include a three-part trip to the Savage Land, with guest stars aplenty. "Spider-Man heads to the Savage Land when it's reported that global warming has started the Antarctic ice fields melting, and the Savage Land is acting like a big rain drain," DeZago says. "The U.S. presence in the Savage Land is felt with S.H.I.E.L.D., while Roxxon Oil will appear to be working to prevent the tragedy as well. Ka-Zar, Shanna, Zabu and eventually Spider-Man become very wary about everyone's motives, and from there, things quickly get wild and out of hand in a very Spider-Man kind of way."

The Vulture also looms large in DeZago's upcoming plans for Spidey. "A lot of people are yelling for the return of the original, old Vulture, and I know that Mike is dying to draw him,"

Will Peter and Mary Jane live happily ever after? Not quite...

DeZago says. "So he's a pretty safe bet for a return. Later on, we'll look at some other long-time characters, re-tooling and reviving them with some of the excitement they had when they first came on the scene."

Returning classic Spider-Man villains to their former glory is something that Macchio feels very strongly about. "You can't do Spider-Man with some of the things we've done to the villains in the last few years," Macchio says. "I do have a villain rehabilitation list set in my mind, and we're working hard on it. We've already had The Looter and Swarm return in *Sensational*, and the Scorpion was just redesigned in *Spider-Man Unlimited*. We'll see others return to their original forms and meanness over the next few months."

Speaking of *Spider-Man Unlimited*, Macchio cautions readers not to ignore the book with its new regular artist Joe Bennett (*Supreme*). "In my opinion, *Unlimited* was taken for granted just as something that was tossed together," Macchio says. "From now on, each of the issues of *Unlimited* will be an important book. We've already had Steve Skroce redesign The Scorpion in one issue, and Tom DeFalco will be writing a Puma story for an upcoming issue. This is not going to be just a book where we throw something together. The stories in *Unlimited* are going to play an important role in who Spider-Man is."

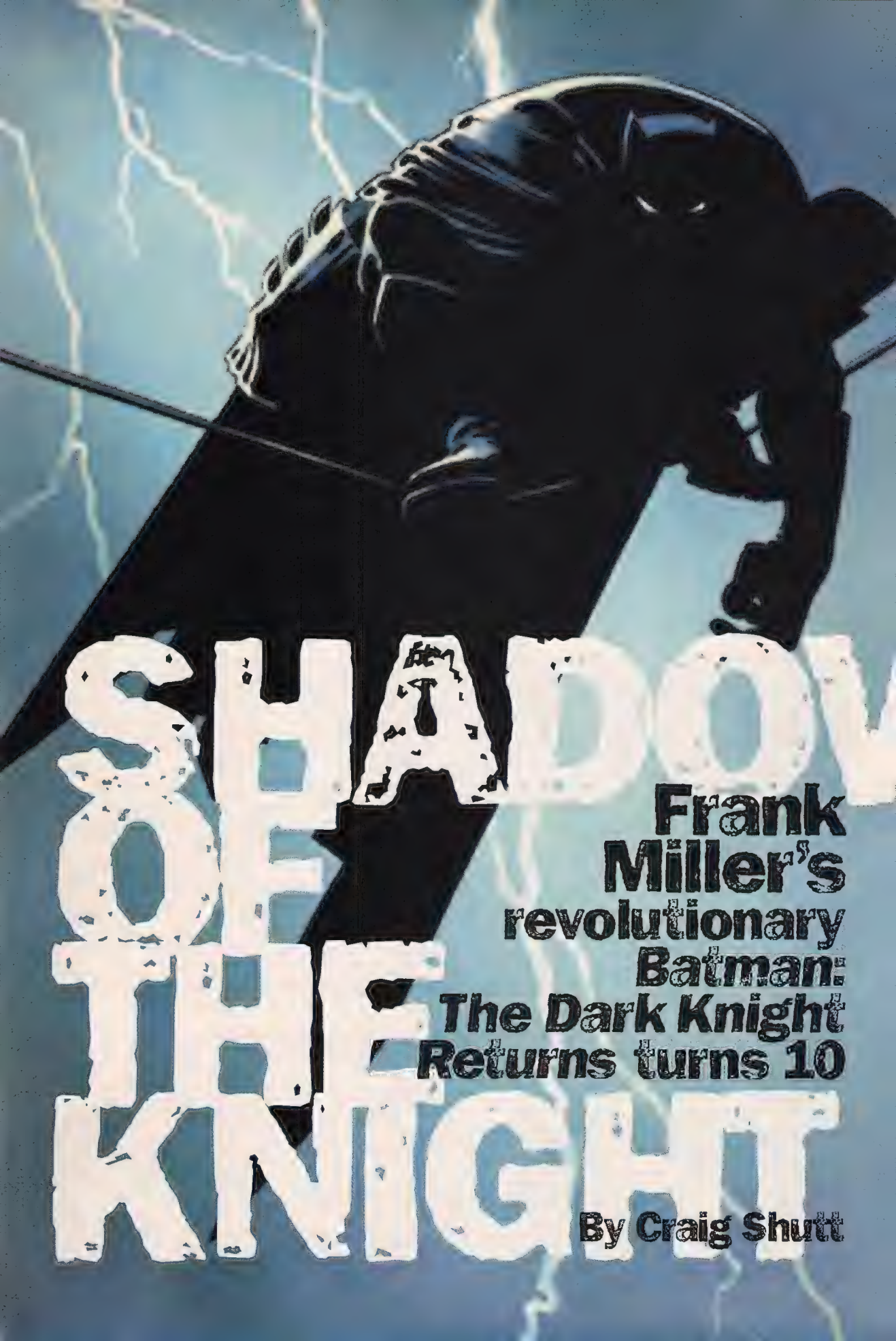
The supporting cast of Spider-Man will also be heavily involved in upcoming stories as well. "We'll have a lot of stuff going on with the supporting cast," Macchio says. "Liz Allen, Betty Brant, all of the *Bugle* people will show up a lot, and Flash Thompson is also going to be heavily involved with the Parkers' life from now on."

In closing, Macchio stresses that he has heard the readers' complaints, and all the creators are working their hardest to return Spider-Man to his rightful place in fans' hearts. "We know what you want, and we're going to deliver on that," Macchio says. "We've heard what everybody says, and we're coming back to make Spider-Man what he should be. Overall, Spider-Man himself doesn't need much fixing. All you have to do is get him back to the character that Stan Lee and Steve Ditko created, and you can't go wrong." W

Matthew Brady, who profiled Backlash in this issue, got bitten by a radioactive spider once. It really, really hurt, and his arm fell off. Darn comic-book science!

"We've heard what everybody says, and we're coming back to make Spider-Man what he should be."

—Ralph Macchio


SHADOW
OF
THE
KNIGHT
Frank Miller's revolutionary Batman: The Dark Knight Returns turns 10
By Craig Shutt

It started it all.

When *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* burst onto the scene in 1986, it changed the industry's perceptions of Batman, superheroes in general and the comics format overall. Starring a Batman in his mid-50s, the four-issue series revolved around the Caped Crusader coming out of retirement to face down his most feared foes in a world gone mad.

Today, gearing up for a 10th anniversary re-release from DC Comics, writer/penciler Frank Miller looks back on his creation with a lot of satisfaction.

"I never read my own work, because all I ever see are the mistakes," he says. "But how can I think badly about something that did my career and the industry as much good as *Dark Knight* did? This is a cause to celebrate for me." Adds inker Klaus Janson, "The book has become a high-water mark by which other projects are compared. It's a lot to live up to, but I don't mind. I'm happy to have been involved and remain in peoples' memories."

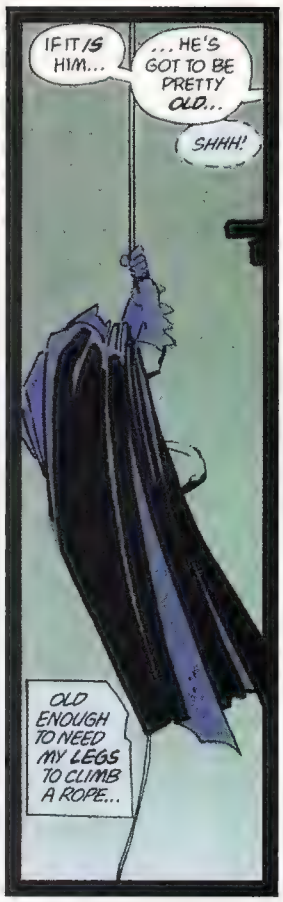
What was so radical that it became a high-water mark? How did it become popular enough to garner articles in *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*? Why is it remembered so fondly? One reason: Batman and comics grew up. Using foreshadowing, irony and flashbacks, Miller's dramatic story and sharp dialogue presented a tougher, more obsessed Batman than ever seen before—an idea that's hard to imagine after the grim 'n' gritty decade it inspired. "I think I was faithful to the spirit of the character, but obviously I was trying to do a radical update," Miller says. "There had been talk of doing a tougher Batman for a long time." And this was reiterated to Miller by fellow creators.

Secondly, many of Miller's ideas have since become standards in comics—the grim 'n' gritty style that was unlike Batman, the slow-motion death scene of Bruce Wayne's parents, the interspersed television screens, even the square-bound, comic-sized four-issue "Prestige" format.

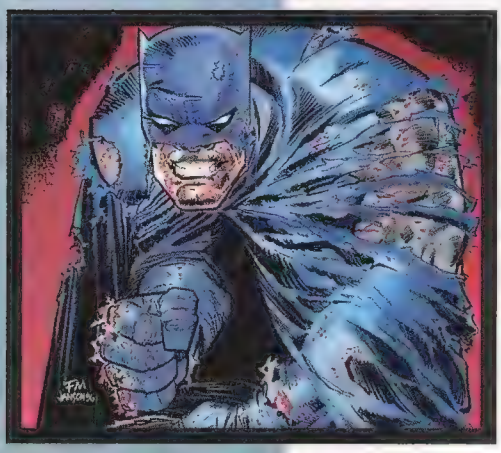
The book's production values also set a standard. "The square-back format was definitely Frank's idea," says *Dark Knight* co-editor Dick Giordano, who was DC's vice president/executive editor at the time and edited the first two issues of *Dark Knight* before handing the reins to Denny O'Neil due to work overload. "We had to struggle to get production people and even some executives to go for the extra costs." Adds Miller, "Many things went wrong in pulling it together on the schedule. It was one of the first high-production books ever done, especially with a big trademarked character, and these things always happen."

The production was critical, because it brought out the nuances of the watercoloring by Lynn Varley, Miller says. "*Dark Knight* demonstrated that it was possible to have color work by an honest-to-god painter in an adventure story and not have the work turn into a piece of proto-fine art," he states. "It was one of the most revolutionary things about the book."

And there was Miller's ability to tell the story. Making waves as a dynamic storyteller with *Daredevil* years previous, Miller came into his own as a bona fide superstar on *Dark Knight*. The breakneck pacing and use of silhouette gave Batman a visually darker edge than had been seen previously.



The inking also was designed to fully enhance Miller's art, Janson notes. "I tried to feature more of Frank than with our earlier work on *Daredevil*," he says. "There was a certain challenge in pulling back to let him show through. It was harder for me to do that then than it is now." Janson also changed his style after the first 18 pages, shifting from a brush to a pen. "There was a six-month gap after that first batch of pages, and during that



"It must have been influential, considering how many people are still ripping it off."

FRANK MILLER

"Like all kids, I DISLIKED ROBIN," Miller says. "It wasn't until I got my hands on Batman that I realized that Robin served a wonderful function. There's nothing like having a sidekick to make the hero look BIG."

time I decided I didn't like how the pages were turning out," he says. "As I look back at it now, I think I was right to change, because the brushwork was too heavy."

The artwork, he adds, didn't knock him out. "The art was secondary to the writing, which was amazing," Janson says. "From a technical point of view, the art moved the story along. Frank was working in a style that is the antithesis of noodling lines and special effects. It was very simple. The writing and the story are the stars."

Written and drawn at the height of the hardline, no-nonsense Ronald Reagan administration (and not-quite-ironically, Reagan was still president in *Dark Knight*'s dreary future), Miller's *Dark Knight* created an obsessed street fighter who didn't bow to authority. Retired 10 years earlier as a result of the death of Jason Todd (Robin), Batman returns to take back the streets. "My Batman is essentially a terrorist, he just fights the right enemy," he laughs. As grim 'n' gritty as the resulting hero was, his initial version was more grim, he notes, and ended with Batman's death. "Usually, I know my ending down to the last word," he says. "But this time, Batman took over, and he said I was a pretty uppity kid at the ripe old age of 30

years old to undo so many years of history." (For more on that first version, see the sidebar.)

Friend and current *Wonder Woman* writer/artist John Byrne convinced him to include Robin and make her a girl by drawing Miller a sketch while the two were flying to a convention. "Like all kids, I disliked Robin," Miller says. "It wasn't until I got my hands on Batman that I realized that Robin served a wonderful function. There's nothing like having a sidekick to make the hero look big. The whole idea of Robin has to be an artist's idea. Visually, it's brilliant. But at the literary level," he laughs, "it's highly questionable."

Making Robin so young also is a requirement, he notes. "It's a mistake to let Robin grow up," he says. "Part of the fun of working on characters like this is justifying ideas that really are just awful, and I worked hard to justify this one. To me, Robin serves as an example of Batman's fanaticism—that he was willing to put a child in danger to achieve his goals." That came across best for Miller in issue #3, when Carrie Kelly's Robin nearly falls to her death, only to catch Batman's cape and climb up into his arms. "When he hugs her and calls her 'good soldier,' that's my favorite scene between the two of them."

Another late addition to the story was Superman, who was a necessary component to the story's ending. Miller admits his view of the Big Blue Boy Scout is not as definitive as his perspective on Batman. "The most questionable thing I did was make Superman a government agent," he says. "If this had been a Superman story, I'd never have done that—and I know that, because I have a Superman story I want to tell someday. In this story, Batman was the hero, so the world was built around him."

In fact, Miller didn't decide to add Superman until he was working on issue #2. "I realized the sense of myth in the story was its most powerful component," he explains. "Batman's world is incomplete without the sunnier hero as counterpoint. Besides, he'd gotten so big and tough that he needed someone who was strong enough to kick his butt."

Pivotal to the Superman/Batman face-off in the fourth and final issue was that no other heroes existed. "One of the problems with superhero comics is that there are so many damn heroes around they're always bumping into each other," he says. His solution was to imply a 1950-style government investigation that ran off all the heroes—except two. "Batman didn't stop doing what he does, he refused to," he says. And Superman became a government agent that could not be referred to by the media. The others went on to other things. (To learn more about those unseen plot points, see the sidebar.) "For Batman to work, there has to be no other heroes around," he explains. "I was looking to portray a world that needed a Batman—and I didn't have to look very far."

Miller selected his villains to comment on different aspects of Batman's personality. "Two-Face reflects the two sides of Batman, which is why I set a key scene in a house of mirrors," he explains. "He represents the two identities at war within Batman in the first issue, and obviously the Batman identity killed the Bruce Wayne side."

The Joker, meanwhile, represented the uncontrollable chaos that conflicts with Batman's desire for

THE ORIGINAL ENDING

Frank Miller almost never changes his story once he starts telling it, but he did with *The Dark Knight Returns*. "The original story was the last mission of an old hero," the writer/artist explains. "He went out on a doomed mission but managed to do good." In this version, which didn't feature either Robin or Superman, Batman dies in a hail of bullets, brought down by the authorities "*a la* 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'."

"The entire story wasn't big enough or heroic enough," he claims. "I don't regret keeping him alive, that was a good call. The only way to leave Batman is looking forward to his next adventure."

THE BACKSTORY

"To get the story started, I had to work out what happened to Batman, and in doing that I had to work out how everyone else got where they were," Frank Miller explains. Some of the key ingredients can be deduced, but Miller filled in other gaps.

For instance, Jason Todd was killed by the Joker, prompting Batman to retire, long after the other heroes had been forced to retire by a government inquiry.

Dick Grayson, the original Robin, grew up and, as often happens with fathers and sons, had a falling out with his mentor. "Dick didn't share Bruce's endless passion," Miller says. "As he got older, he decided Batman was wrong in what he did. In Batman's eyes, that was a betrayal, and they never spoke again." Grayson also didn't become Nightwing, he adds. "Not in my version."

The personality of Oliver Queen (a.k.a. Green Arrow) was built from the Dennis O'Neil/Neal Adams version of the early 1970s, Miller says, evolving into a left-wing radical who wound up in prison. "He was a 1960s burn-out, to tell the truth," he adds. He lost his arm in a tussle with Superman, when the Man of Steel pulled a little too hard. "Oops," Miller laughs. "Sorry, Ollie!"

Commissioner Gordon's knowledge of Batman's identity falls into what Miller calls his "Foggy Nelson theory" from *Daredevil*. "Jim Gordon, like Foggy, knew the secret, but he also knew it was really important to his pal not to let on. Gordon's a detective—he could figure it out."

His one regret, he notes, is his treatment of Selina Kyle, the retired Catwoman-turned-bloated-prostitute. "She deserved better," he admits. "It was cocky of me, and it was the one case where I hadn't done my research. She looked pretty bad. I tried to make up for it in 'Batman: Year One' [in *Batman* #404-#407, where she was a strong female lead]." She and Batman had "an interlude" sometime earlier, he confirms.

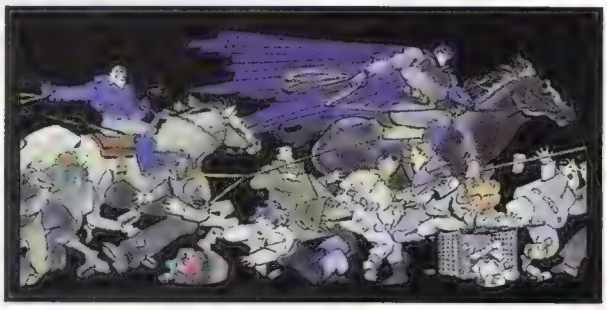
His reason why these ideas were never fleshed out? "When you're excited about a project, you always want to leave the readers wanting more." And he certainly succeeded.

THE SEQUEL

"At one time, I had a sequel planned," Frank Miller says of following up on *The Dark Knight Returns*. "I had a whole thing with Wonder Woman planned [that didn't make it into *Dark Knight*], there were a million places I could have gone."

Is a sequel still possible? "I've been tempted," he admits. "There are several old characters I'd like to put my hands on. But I'm on fire with *Sin City*, and in many ways *Dark Knight* was preamble to *Sin City*. In fact, if you really want to celebrate *Dark Knight*," he laughs, "go out and buy 10 copies of *Sin City* right now."

Even so, he doesn't rule out the Dark Knight returning yet again. "I'd only do it if I also drew it, and that's not possible now," he says. "I'm having the best time in my career with *Sin City*, and I think I'm doing a lot more that contributes to the future of the industry than the past. But you might get a completely different answer from me in a year or two." Can anyone say *Batman: The Dark Knight Forever*? ■ CS



A PERFECT 10

The Dark Knight is returning, all right. In November, DC Comics has scheduled several special editions, posters, t-shirts and other items to celebrate *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*' 10th anniversary. They include:

10th Anniversary Slipcase Set• This $100 set features new cover art and 28 pages of sketches and text by Frank Miller, who also signs this limited edition. The set also features three Prestige Format books: a separate sketchbook, a bound copy of the script for issue #1 and a collection of press clippings. Two four-color prints also are included in the set, which ships November 6.

Hardcover edition• Includes new art on the dust-jacket and the same sketch pages as the slipcase set but not the signature plate. It costs $45 and ships November 20. (A paperback edition of this version is planned for 1997.)

Posters• A reissue of the original retail poster, showing Batman standing over the art-deco cityscape of Gotham. It costs $5.95 and ships November 6. A second poster with new art, depicting Batman silhouetted against a lightning bolt, will ship November 20.

Statue• A cold-cast porcelain statue of Batman kneeling next to Robin as she shoots her slingshot. Designed by Miller and sculpted by William Paquet, it costs $195 and ships November 13.

T-Shirt• A black t-shirt featuring the cover art to the new slipcase set. It costs $15.95 (or $17.95 for you extra-beefy, XXL fans) and ships November 13.

DC warns that many of these items are one-time only products, so if you want one, make it known to your local retailer. ■ CS

order. "The Joker was the most fascinating," he says. "He was the perfect antithesis to a complete control freak like Batman. Batman believes the world only makes sense if you force it to. The Joker is his worst nightmare. He's the id run amok—especially with the obvious context of the Joker perversely being in love with Batman. Everyone's always known it was true, I just put that in to prove it."

Although Miller presented these characters as never seen before, that doesn't mean he had no restraints. "I played the game creators always play of seeing how far they can go," he admits. For instance, he was told to use the yellow oval around the Batman's chest emblem, and Miller did so. Then he had Batman's uniform torn to shreds by the street gang toward the end of issue #2. When he recovered and put on a new costume, it didn't have the oval. "I think I snuck that one by them," he laughs.

Ten years later, *Dark Knight*'s enormous success muddies the fact that it was a big risk for both Miller and DC.

Miller's clout was put into question when his previous project *Ronin*, another risky venture with DC, flopped. A six-issue, 48-page miniseries, Miller's story about a futuristic ninja hadn't been a dramatic sales success, says editor Giordano. "*Ronin* had been a bit of a disappointment—not creatively, but in sales," he says. "Everyone hoped it would sell like Frank's *Daredevil* work, and it didn't do that well."

Taking that one step further by working on Batman wasn't a sure thing, Giordano stresses. "This was DC's first attempt to do something a little different with a character that was being published at the time," he points out. "It essentially was the first-ever 'Elseworlds' story."

Wary after *Ronin*, distributors ordered conservatively on *Dark Knight*, Giordano reports. "We felt strongly about the book, so we overprinted it by close to 500,000 copies," he says. "It was a big risk, but we sold those out before the first copies shipped."

Miller too remembers being worried. "I had no idea what the reaction would be," he says. "I was terrified. I was afraid *Dark Knight Returns* would come to mean what the distributors were going to do with it. I knew I was taking chances, because I was mucking about with a character that was near and dear to the readership's heart."

Miller's approach to the work electrified the industry, creating changes in Batman's attitude and kinds of storytelling that are felt today. "It must have been influential, considering how many people are still ripping it off," he notes wryly. "But I can't get too crabby about that. I just hope people do good work if it's going to inspire them. When you do work for hire, you know the game. If it worked, I knew it was going to get used again. I just wish I hadn't gotten everyone doing so damn many heroes with gritted teeth."

Along with *Watchmen*, which came out shortly afterward, *Dark Knight* has been credited with the grim 'n' gritty trend. It also proposed an obsessed Batman who was a little over the edge, but making Batman grim and gritty isn't the message he'd hoped the book would send.

"Too many people forget how funny and romantic the story was a lot of the time," he says. "They mistakenly look at it as a realistic piece. I've never done a piece of realism in my life! I set out to bring romance and myth back to the character, not to create a sad old man in tights. He clearly enjoyed what he was doing."

The most important message creators should take away from the book and its influence after 10 years isn't what's shown on the page, Miller notes. "Artistically, what was best about *The Dark Knight Returns* wasn't that it had a cool, scary look or those beautiful Lynn Varley colors or that bold Klaus Janson inking, but that we were doing comics as we saw them," he says. "We weren't trying to do a house style or satisfy a market or get onto anyone's Top 10 list. The best thing about comics is when artists are as true as they can be to the material and to themselves." W

At left: One of Batman's vigilante disciples
Above: The Man of Steel is ordered to take down the Dark Knight

Craig Shutt, who also gives the rundown on Hepcats *this issue, has seen the Batmobile get its fair share of dents over the years.*

OKAY, BOYS, LET'S GO OVER DIS AGAIN. WHEN THE BIG GUY INNA RED SUIT SHOWS UP, JIMMY VIOLIN HUSTLES 'IM INTO DA CORNER.

AN WE SEZ WE BEEN NICE..*REAL* NICE...THEN WE DEMAND THE *GOODS*. YEAH.

NOIR... *SHADES OF NOIR...FACES IN THE CROWD* AND ALL THE REST. HE DON'T GIVE 'EM UP, WE PLUG 'IM. AND THE LITTLE REINDEER, TOO.

·TANG·

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THE WIZARD Q&A:

BY TOM RUSSO

OWING HIS CAREER TO ODD COINCIDENCES, *GREEN LANTERN* WRITER RON MARZ'S FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER

Just three short years after breaking into comics, writer Ron Marz secured his place at the top of the industry by elbowing aside *Green Lantern*'s protagonist Hal Jordan in favor of Kyle Rayner, a Lantern more to his liking. But ask Marz how much he and Kyle are alike, and he's not entirely sure. "I know Mark Waid says that the Flash is very much his alter-ego," Marz says, his "aw shucks" manner making it fairly evident how he was able to weather those early Hal-versus-Kyle firestorms so successfully. "I guess in some respects, Kyle is my alter-ego as well, but I'm not as conscious of it." Still, the parallels aren't so tough to find: Just as Kyle wound up with the Green Lantern ring simply by being in the proverbial right place at the right time, quirky coincidences and bits of strange luck have seemingly always framed Marz's career too. Maybe he would have gotten into comics no matter what—and logged those credits on everything from *The Silver Surfer* to *StormWatch* to *Marvel versus DC* no matter what—but coming from Jim Starlin's neck of the Woodstock area sure didn't hurt...

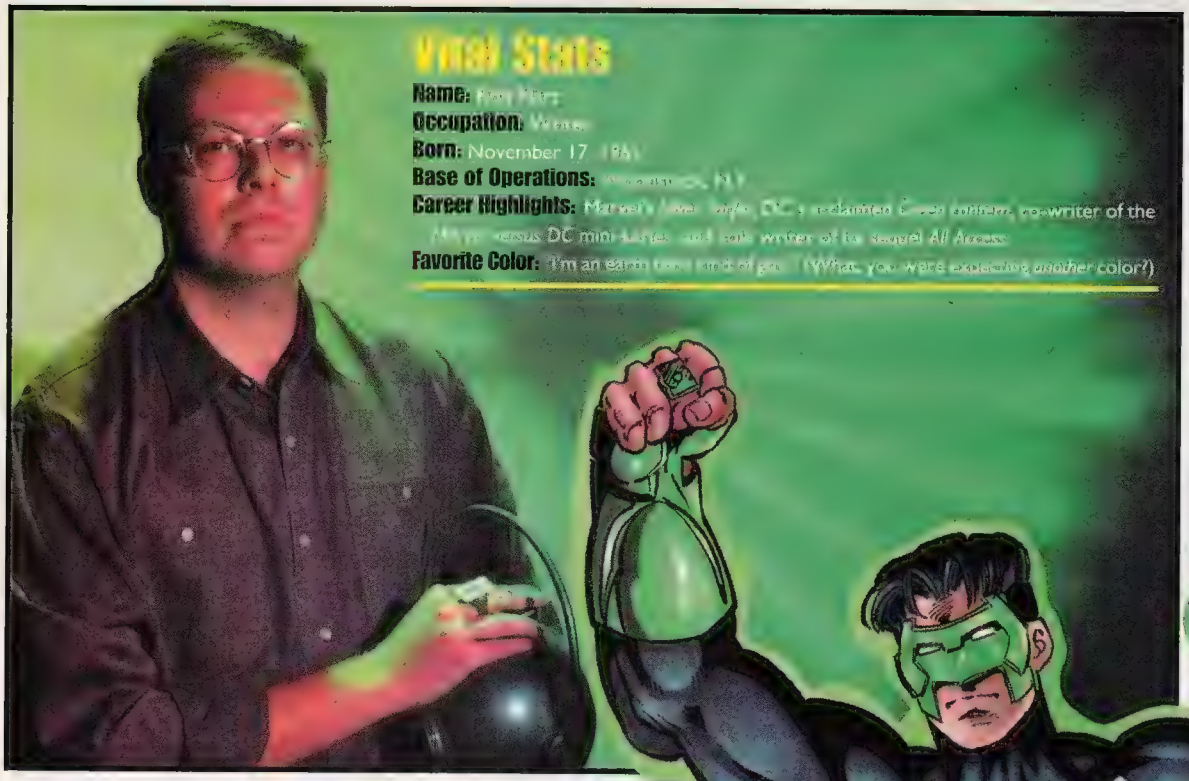
WIZARD: Did you have much of an idea growing up that, in addition to Jim Starlin, there was an entire community of comics people around you in the Woodstock, N.Y., vicinity?

RON MARZ: Didn't have a clue. But yeah, Terry Austin lives five minutes down the road. Jim is five minutes the other way. Bernie Wrightson is 10 minutes away. Joe Staton. Barry Windsor-Smith. Fred Hembeck. I know I'm leaving some folks out, but I guess we could publish our own comics if we wanted to, because there's certainly enough bodies who do every various permutation of the industry. It really is a funky little town in what is otherwise, well, upstate New York.

So how did you hook up with Starlin originally? Literally just by living down the road from him or something?

The real genesis of the whole thing was that I had done an interview with Bernie Wrightson for my high school paper, and he and I stayed in touch over the years. I would go to parties at Bernie's house, and I got to know Jim pretty well through that. Eventually, Jim suggested that I might want to think about writing comics—"a good way to put food on the table" was the way he phrased it—and I said, "Well, sure, that sounds cool." So in late '89, Jim brought me in on what ended up being my first job, co-writing *Silver Surfer Annual* #3. I helped him out on a couple of other *Surfer* issues, and then when he decided he was leaving the book, they handed it over to me—with, I'm sure, a great deal of arm-twisting from Jim.

PHOTOS BY KEN REGAN



Vital Stats

Name: [illegible]
Occupation: [illegible]
Born: November 17, [illegible]
Base of Operations: [illegible]
Career Highlights: [illegible] DC's reclaimed *Green Lantern*, co-writer of the [illegible] DC mini-series, and sole writer of its sequel *All Access*
Favorite Color: "I'm an earth [illegible] kind of guy." (What, you were expecting *another* color?)

You made the move into comics from an editorial job at the local newspaper. Were you on the municipal sewer project beat or anything?

[*Laughs*] No, I covered sports. I watched a whole lot of high school football and basketball, and once in a while got down to see the Mets or the Yankees. In fact, in '87, I covered the Mets game where Dwight Gooden first came back from drug rehab—and it just so happened that at home plate before the game, Spider-Man and Mary Jane got married.

So you took that as some sort of sign.

I took it as a sign that maybe I should have paid attention—I was actually in the press dining room having dinner when they got married, and I didn't bother to watch. [*Laughs*] I think I was in there listening to [Mets broadcaster] Rusty Staub or something. Things like that were a lot of fun, but I knew that I didn't want to work at a newspaper for the rest of my life because after a while it's not real fulfilling. You're basically just a conduit for information, and there's not a lot of creativity involved in the sense of making things up. They kind of frown on that if you're a journalist.

So you ditched the newspaper career, segued into writing *The Silver Surfer* and then came... *Green Lantern*.

Yeah, getting the offer to do *Green Lantern* is something that's still pretty vividly etched in my memory. It was a Friday night, and I had just come home from a day of meetings at Marvel down in New York. I picked up my wife, we went out for dinner and came back—it had to be after 10 o'clock by that point—and [*Green Lantern* editor Kevin] Dooley called. I had worked for Kevin on a couple of *Green Lantern Corps Quarterly* stories, so there was some basis for a relationship there. He said, "We're going to change *Green Lantern* drastically, because the book is in trouble and it needs to be pumped up," and he offered it to me. And the weird thing is, just before going out to eat, I changed into shorts and a T-shirt—a Green Lantern T-shirt that I had picked up at the Warner Brothers store. I think I had worn that shirt maybe once before in my life.

What was running through your mind during the call?

I thought, "Man, this sounds cool"—right up to the point where they said, "...and then we're gonna get rid of Hal." I mean, I had always *felt* one of Green Lantern's problems was that Hal was just one of a bunch of guys who had the same powers and the same costume, and the others just happened to look like vanilla pudding or

"...Green Lantern just never really did it for me. I found the book to be a little dull, because here was this guy with this cool ring, and he was always using it to make giant boxing gloves or giant fans or something. It just didn't appeal to me..."

whatever. The Corps and the Guardians were baggage that detracted from the central character. So when the powers that be were discussing it with me that night, that's where everything was going: "Yeah, we're gonna get rid of the Corps, we're gonna get rid of the Guardians. We're gonna get rid of Hal too." And I thought, "Oh, man, I don't know about *that*." We talked about it some more, but I didn't take the job right away, because I did think it was a pretty serious change in comics history, really.

Was *Green Lantern* a character that you had had any particular urge to do?

As a kid, it certainly wasn't one of my favorites. I was a Titans fan and a Batman fan, and Green Lantern just never really did it for me. I found the book to be a little dull, because here was this guy with this cool ring, and he was always using it to make giant boxing gloves or giant fans or something. It just didn't appeal to me visually.

Did DC already have Kyle Rayner in mind as the new Green Lantern when you came on board?

No, that was all kind of dropped in my lap. They didn't have a name, they didn't have a look—actually, I dug in my heels to try to keep Hal's costume, because I still think it's just about the snazziest one in comics. But DC was pretty adamant about wanting to start *everything* over from scratch. Anyway, I got the name Kyle from Kyle Reese in "The Terminator." And as for Rayner, Kevin put together a list of Irish surnames and their meanings from a book, because I just thought that it would be cool to have Kyle be Irish. I can't remember for certain, but I think Rayner means "great warrior."

At this point, was DC pretty clearly backing Kyle for the long haul?

If there was ever a back door to this plan, if there was a thought that, "Man, if this blows up in our faces, we're going to bring Hal back," I was never privy to it. As far as I knew, and as far as I was concerned, this was the decision and we were sticking with it. We were in that post-death-of-Superman/post-breaking-of-Batman time, when this was very much billed as the next big DC shake-up, and we wanted it to be something different. This was going to be permanent.

How do you view Kyle as a character?

The character has evolved over the three years or so I've been doing the book, and I hope that's shown. I wanted to start out with a guy who was really—no pun intended—green. He wasn't typical superhero material. I really liked that idea of just grabbing somebody off the street who maybe had the makings of a hero inside him, but hadn't really shown it previously. And hopefully his evolution has now brought him to the point where he's accepted as one of the DC heroes. I mean by the fans, not just within [the context of] the DC Universe. By far, the most satisfying letters we get are the ones that say, "I was a big Hal fan. I hated you guys for what you did to him, and now I really like the book. I was prepared to walk away, but you didn't let me."

But then, of course, there were those who did have trouble letting Hal go.

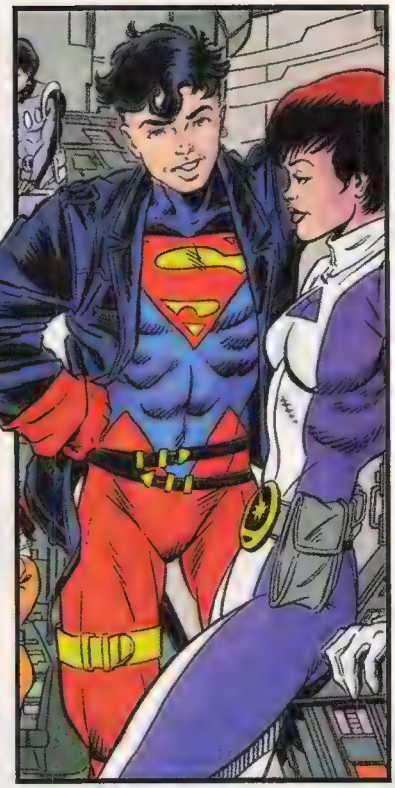
And there's a small but vocal minority who still can't get over it, who still feel a need to make fun of Kyle or rag on Kevin or denigrate me as a writer because of what we did to Hal Jordan. I think it's great that people can be so passionate about this stuff, but I do think there's a line you cross after a certain point, where you need to take a step back and take a bite of the real world. If you're real upset about Kyle Rayner being Green Lantern, don't buy the book anymore. Don't make yourself crazy on my account, please. But in a lot of respects, I think the controversy that surrounded the book when I took over was great. I would rather have people debating the pros and cons of it and maybe shrieking their protests about something than just ignoring it.

It's interesting, though—for all the importance you've placed on making Kyle likable to readers, at first, a lot of people saw him as a standoffish jerk.

Well, I purposely made him kind of cocky and arrogant initially. Here's this guy who gets the most powerful weapon in the universe literally dropped into his palm. From where I was sitting, I thought that that *would* make you a jerk for a while. If you could do anything you wanted to, you probably would. And I guess I wanted to have his character be substantially different from Hal's. Hal was always sort of a dull, straight-arrow guy. He never did have much personality, and I wanted Kyle to be at the opposite end of the spectrum.

It looks like Hal Jordan's outcome has been pretty well dictated by *The Final Night*. What made this the right time and place to kill him off, as opposed to *Zero Hour*?

I really don't have an answer for that, because *Final Night* was something that was out of my hands. Karl Kesel came up with the idea. I was a little perturbed that Hal was being killed off and that I hadn't really been privy to any of the discussions about it, but obviously all of these toys belong to the DC playground and we're just borrowing them. I do think once things got out into the open and we understood what was going to happen, Kevin and I got to put in our two cents and nudge the story in certain directions in terms of Hal's portrayal. You'd have to ask Karl, but I think maybe there was some desire on his part to have Hal go out with a bang, as a hero. And there was a desire on my part to make sure that we



"Superboy is kind of a screwball kid...more interested in checking out the babes in bikinis than in the more serious aspects of what he's doing...he's much more of a let's-go-have-fun kind of guy."

didn't just trash all of the changes in Hal's character that had been wrought in the last three years. I was very comfortable with Hal as Parallax. But now that *Final Night* is all done, I think it was a really powerful story. And it gave me the opportunity to do the Parallax one-shot [*Parallax: Emerald Night*], to really get inside Hal's head for the first time and figure out how this square-jawed hero could have ended up like this.

It was fairly widely publicized several months back that you were taking a break from everything but *Green Lantern* to spend time with your son, who was born just last summer. Were

Marz Attacks

Here's a preview of new material Ron Marz plans to tackle in the months ahead and beyond, both in his regular books and elsewhere:

Green Lantern Issue #83 kicks off the three-part "Retribution" story arc, in which Kyle goes up against a space-faring killer named Fatality who's got a "Hard Copy"-ready fixation on Green Lanterns past *and* present. "Kyle will be out in space, forced to go through a lot of trials without the ring powered up," Marz says. "He's going to have to get by with his own wits and stamina." And for those still hoping to see the Guardians somehow resuscitated, don't hold your breath. "I'm real comfortable with the Guardians gone," Marz insists. "The way I see the DC Universe now, it's like there's no law west of the Pecos. The Guardians, Green Lanterns and Darkstars are all gone, and it's a free-for-all out there. I think that's kind of cool." With Paul Pelletier's departure for *Superboy and the Ravers*, look for Jeff Johnson (*Justice League: A Midsummer's Nightmare*) to join Darryl Banks as *Green Lantern*'s new alternate penciler.

Superboy In an imminent four-parter tentatively titled "Meltdown," Superboy is shanghaied by the Agenda, a genetic cabal bent on exploiting him to produce more clones. "They create a clone called Match, which is Superboy's genetic material refined into something even more powerful," Marz says. "Kind of like Bizarro, but in this case the doppelganger is, if anything, more perfect." Steel, Supergirl and Superman himself are likely to guest star. And on a marginally less menacing note, "I'm also going to get a love triangle going between Tana, Roxy and Superboy," he adds. "Romantic angst is always a whole lot of fun to throw into a book."

All Access Following this month's Superman/Spider-Man/Venom match-up, issue #2 of the *Marvel versus DC* sequel has Robin and Jubilee facing off against Two-Face. Due the same month, issue #3 has "a little bit of everybody—Robin, Jubilee, Batman, Doctor Strange, the Scorpion and, ultimately, the X-Men. And the fourth issue is the big blowout, with the X-Men and the Justice League."

Green Lantern/Flash: Faster Friends Slated for December, this two-part bookshelf follow-up to the "Fast Friends" storyline (*Green Lantern* #66-#67), boasts Marz and a gallery of artists on the first issue, with the second written by Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn, and drawn by Val Semeiks. Explains Marz: "This is an unrevealed adventure from Jay Garrick and Alan Scott's past, their first job together. And they're not particularly thrilled with each other, which resonates nicely with Kyle and Wally West's prickly relationship right now."

Green Lantern/Superboy? "It is something I would like to do," Marz admits. "But at the moment we've got so much stuff planned for both books, we're not going to force it. Obviously, though, as Dooley said to me, 'I hear you know the guy who writes *Superboy*. Why don't you talk to him about doing a crossover?' It seems like a natural." ■ *TR*

your editors "'90s" enough to be cool with that?

Well, ultimately you have your professional responsibilities and you've got to turn in your work when you're supposed to. But I have to say, both at DC and also at Dark Horse—where *Batman/Aliens* [finally on schedule for March and April] has been an ongoing concern for what seems like half my life now—everybody was great. I think Valiant was a little peeved that I walked away from *X-O Manowar* when the ship was sinking. But [generally speaking], everybody was really happy for us to have the baby, and they made you feel like a member of the family. You know, editors are people too. [*Laughs*] They have the same real-life concerns as everybody else. So, sure, they cut you a little slack.

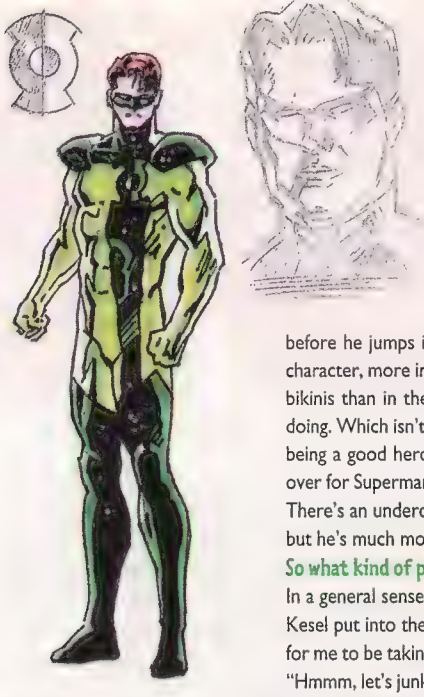
Did having your baby also lead to your leaving *Silver Surfer*, or were there other factors having more to do with Marvel itself?

No, at that point I had really gone as far with the Surfer as I could. I probably even overstayed my welcome on the book, because I think that things started to peter out creatively. After 50-odd issues, I didn't have a whole lot to say about the guy. And you know, I really enjoyed writing him, but writing Green Lantern is a hundred times more satisfying because he's a "real" guy. When you're dealing with this alien on a surfboard as opposed to a regular Earthbound human being, there's only so much character stuff you can do. And a lot of that is angst-ridden, woe-is-me stuff, which gets a little old. The Surfer is a great character, but I think ultimately he probably works better as a supporting character.

Anything new going on with Marvel at the moment?

They don't seem to be real interested in throwing anything my way, and I haven't been knocking on their door because I've been so busy with stuff from DC. But if there's one character at Marvel that I would love to do and would find a way to do no matter what, it's Doctor Strange. Doc was always one of my favorites. I just think he's the coolest-looking guy out there. Maybe someday.

Your new gig on *Superboy* has also drawn a lot of interest. How do you go about keeping the identities of Superboy and Green Lantern distinct?



Above and opposite: Early costume and character design sketches of GLs past and present by Green Lantern penciler Darryl Banks

A number of people have said to me, "Gee, aren't they kind of similar," and I don't find them to be that way at all. I think Kyle is very self-aware and very mature now that he's come into his own as Green Lantern. Whereas Superboy is kind of a screwball kid who maybe doesn't think things through completely before he jumps into action. He's a very surface-level character, more interested in checking out the babes in bikinis than in the more serious aspects of what he's doing. Which isn't to say that he's not concerned about being a good hero and being worthy someday to take over for Superman, because that's what his intention is. There's an undercurrent of that stuff in his personality, but he's much more of a let's-go-have-fun kind of guy.

So what kind of plans have you got for him?

In a general sense, I want to continue the fun that Karl Kesel put into the book for 30 issues. It's a little weird for me to be taking over a book and not wanting to say, "Hmmm, let's junk a lot of this and start over." But with *Superboy*, there's not a lot I don't like about the book. I think the biggest way I'll put my stamp on it is to strike a greater balance between the high jinks and more serious stuff. One of the major things I want to address in the first year is the fact that Superboy is a clone, not a "real" human being. I think that eventually that has to come home to roost, so we've planned a four-issue story arc [see sidebar] which is going to deal with just that. Maybe he'll have a bit more self-awareness after the whole thing. If he survives it, of course.

Did you lobby for *Superboy*? Or did DC just come to you on the strength of *Green Lantern* and say, "Well, you've got that book nailed, so we thought you'd do well on this one"?

I got a call from Dan Jurgens one morning and we were just chatting about nothing in particular, and he happened to mention that *Superboy* had freed up. I had liked Superboy ever since he was introduced in "Reign of the Supermen." I thought the characters that came out of that storyline were really strong, important characters in the DC Universe, and that the one with the most potential was Superboy. So I thought about it a bit and called [*Superboy* editor] Frank Pittarese, and he said, "Oh jeez, I was just going to call you. Do you want to do the book?"

Another one of those happy coincidences.

Yeah, I guess it was destiny. I was *supposed* to do *Superboy*.

And were you by any chance wearing a T-shirt with a big red "S" on it at the time?

Uh, to my knowledge, no. [*Laughs*] But if you want to make it up, that'd be great. W

Tom Russo is out scouring cheesy T-shirt shops all over LA. for one with a big ol' picture of the Best Original Screenplay Oscar.

THE CODE

The Comics Code Authority still exists, but does anyone care?

If you do it wrong, you have to do it again until you get it right.

At least, that's what happens if you mess with the Comics Code Authority, comics' self-policing organization.

The Comics Code seal has been a staple of mainstream comics for more than 40 years. Code reviewers examine every page of every comic produced each month by member publishers who display the Code seal on their covers. These reviewers ensure that each comic meets the Code's printed standards for violence, language, sexual situations, drug use and other controversial situations.

But with the revolutionary changes in the industry since the 1950s—heck, since 1990—does the Code still play an important role? Or is it holding back comics from achieving their true potential?

Some believe its creation was an absolute necessity brought on by Dr. Fredric Wertham's 1954 book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which proposed that comic books influenced children to become juvenile delinquents. His theories led to hearings that fall by the Congressional Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to determine the influence of comics on juvenile crime.

Immediately following those hearings, the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) was created by John Goldwater, then-publisher of Archie Comics. Nearly all publishers joined, as did distributors, printers and engravers, in an effort to head off government regulation. The only major publisher to decline was Dell, which developed its own "Pledge to Parents" as a guarantee of high moral standards.

"There's no question in my mind that if we hadn't established the Code, Congress would have enacted very harsh and restrictive legislation regulating comics," says Goldwater. "The politicians weren't interested in educating the public; they wanted publicity."

The publishers were forced to enact the Code, stresses Michael I. Silberkleit, chairman and publisher at Archie Comics and chairman of the CMAA. "Distributors were sending all of their comics back unopened, even *Mickey Mouse*. They didn't want to be caught between the publishers and the public. The Code saved our industry."

But some argue that publishers overreacted and created a Code which put such a stranglehold on comics that they've never recovered. Frank Miller, a vocal opponent of any cover label or form of censorship, says, "The Comics Code was the stupidest and most cowardly self-inflicted wound comics has ever committed. It wasn't designed to protect us from anybody; it was the result of a conspiracy [by competing comic book publishers] to put EC Comics out of business."

Miller's claims carry weight, as there are very specific prohibitions in the original Code against using the words "crime," "terror" and "horror" on covers, which are said by some to have been aimed at crippling Bill Gaines' popular EC Comics line (which featured *Crime SuspenStories*, *Crypt of Terror* and *Vault of Horror*), along with Lev Gleason Publications' successful *Crime Does Not Pay*. Indeed, after the Code went into effect, Gleason went out of business and Gaines dropped all of his horror and science-fiction comics. He changed his one remaining title, *Mad*, into a magazine to avoid the Code, since it only regulated comics.

Similar government scrutiny of the movie industry resulted in sanitized movies for a while, but didn't eliminate everything that wasn't aimed at children, points out John R. Tebbel, a popular-culture writer and a Code historian. "The Code completely bent the twig that grew into the comics tree we know today," he says. "As much as I love comics, I still wonder what we might have had if the Code hadn't been so restrictive."

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Since its inception, the Code has been updated twice, in 1971 and 1994. The first changes resulted from 1971 stories by both Marvel and DC, published *despite* Code rejection. *Amazing Spider-Man* #96-#97 showed Peter Parker's roommate, Harry Osborn, high on drugs (LSD), while *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #86 depicted Green Arrow's sidekick Speedy as a heroin addict. Both stories generated considerable press for their Codeless condition.

The 1994 change was precipitated by less-specific but similar evolutions in both the audience and storytelling, says Victor Gorelick, managing editor of Archie Comics. He sits on the Comics Code Authority governing board along with the chief editors of the other publisher members (Marvel, DC and BIG Entertainment). "We tried to make the Code more flexible," he explains. "We wanted to give writers and artists more freedom to be creative for today's readers."

Flexibility may be good, but do comics need a Code at all? When so much market share is controlled by non-members, are those who subscribe to it playing with one hand tied behind their backs?

Apparently not, says Silberkleit, as Code

BY CRAIG SHUTT

WAR

This issue reprints *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #86, one of the first comics published after Code rejection

members have a definite advantage in the entire comics market. "Many comics fans forget that there are two distinct comics markets in America: newsstand sales and the direct market," he explains. "Many distributors and major retailers won't accept comics for newsstand sales without the Code seal." This hasn't changed since the 1950s, he says, and probably won't. Adds Gorelick, "Newsstand distributors and retailers see the Code as a buffer between the industry and them. They can point to it if someone complains about content."

Doesn't that lead to censorship? "You can take the seal off your book if you don't want to make the content changes we suggest," Silberkleit argues. But editors of Code-approved comics know that the decision to remove the seal from a specific issue will cut the issue's sales, since it will be handled by significantly fewer newsstand distributors and retailers. Non-member publishers can submit individual books to the Code for a per-issue fee, in order to ensure newsstand acceptance. Bongo has taken this approach with some of its comics, Silberkleit notes, as did BIG for its newsstand titles, which no longer are being published.

CODEWRITING

In general, creators say they understand the rules when they write a Code-approved book. "I haven't run into any trouble with the Code, but I haven't yet written stories aimed strictly at adults," says Kurt Busiek, who writes the Code-approved *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* for Marvel and the unsubmitted *Astro City* for Homage Comics. "Certainly, nobody wants to sell a comic to an inappropriate audience. The goal should be to package the comic so the proper audience finds it."

Pages for every comic being reviewed are sent to the Code Authority's New York City office, where reviewers note any problems, but don't suggest changes. The pages are returned to the editor for script or art corrections, or the objections can be appealed on the spot. Appeals are heard by the chief editors sitting on the board, who either uphold the reviewer's ruling or grant an exception. "If a lot of rulings are being reversed by the editors," says Silberkleit, "it makes it obvious that we need to change our reviewing guidelines."

It also means the companies may wind up reviewing each other's books. "My objection to the Code is mostly in the organization," Busiek explains. "It sets up editors at Archie and DC to review Marvel's books.

1954's TOP 10 NO-NOS

Here's a look at 10 things to keep in mind if you're creating comics to pass the original 1954 Comics Code:

10. "In every instance, good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds."

9. "Passion or romantic interest shall never be treated in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions."

8. "Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and, wherever possible, good grammar should be employed."

7. "Females shall be drawn realistically without undue emphasis on any physical quality."

6. "If crime is depicted, it shall be as a sordid and unpleasant activity."

5. "Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with, walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism and werewolfism are prohibited."

4. "Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable."

3. "All lurid, unsavory or gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated."

2. "The letters of the word 'crime'...shall never be appreciably greater in dimension than the other words contained in the title. The word 'crime' shall never appear alone on a cover."

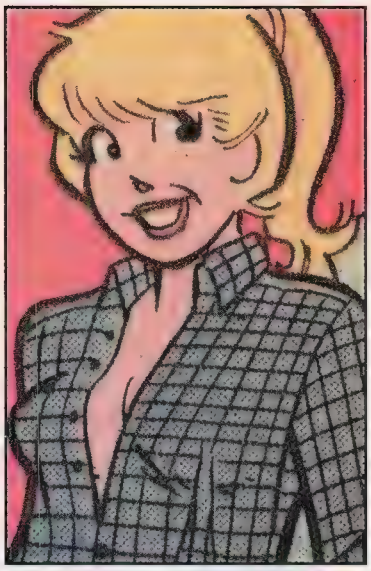
1. "No comic magazine shall use the word 'horror' or 'terror' in its title."

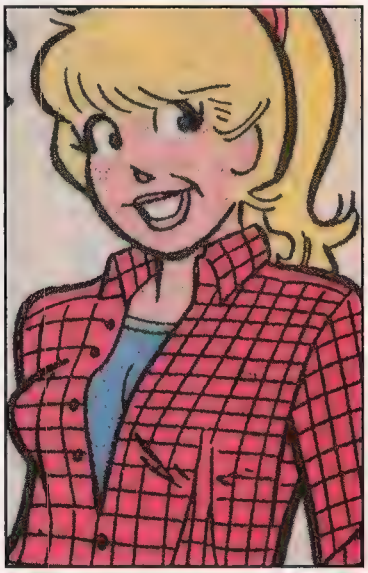
And just in case a loophole was left open, "All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited." So there. ■ *CS*

Marvel should decide on its own where to draw the line for its books."

But oddly enough, some creators working under the Code say their editors are stricter than the Code, negating Code objections before they even arise. "Marvel's restrictions are far more limiting than the Code's are," says Mark Waid. No curse words—including hell and damn—are allowed at Marvel. Waid's X-Men story, "Hell-bound Train" [*X-Men* #51], was changed to "Death-bound Train" in the office even before it went to the Code.

On the other end of the spectrum, though, even a publisher like Archie isn't exempt from interfering editors. Jeff Branch, editor of the Archie fanzine *Riverdale Ramblings*, points out that in *Betty & Veronica* #307 (1981), Betty is depicted on a fashion page with enough cleavage to show she isn't wearing a bra. When the art was reused in the letters column of *Betty's Diary* #14 (1987), a line was drawn across her chest and the area below was colored, giving her a tank top beneath the shirt. And in *Betty & Veronica Summer Fun* #520 (1982), the girls built sand sculptures of themselves on the beach. When reprinted in *Betty & Veronica Digest* #56 (1992), the sand sculptures had lines drawn in to represent bathing suits. "Publishers have to use discretion and understand who is buying their comics and who may be reading them," says Gorelick. "Many parents buy our digests at grocery store checkouts, and they have to be assured that these are comics they can give to their young children."





Even publishers like Archie correct their own "mistakes"

POOR REVIEWS

Today's Code is general enough that inconsistent reviews—or at least the perception of inconsistency—remains a problem, creators say. "What gets through depends on who does the review and what they had for lunch," says John Ostrander, writer on DC's *The Spectre*, which isn't Code-approved. Adds Dan Jurgens, "The inconsistency is really annoying." He mentions Dorek's death scene in *Teen Titans* (vol. 2) #3, which he was forced to redo. "I could have quickly found a number of Marvel and DC books that featured more graphic violence."

Even worse, he adds, Code reviewers don't see the forest for the trees. "They'll allow a scene in which Thor is in bed with the Enchantress [*Thor* #493], which passes because their only concern is if it shows nudity." The reviewers are sometimes so focused on one specific thing—like whether a page features nudity—that they miss the entire message behind the page: Thor and the Enchantress were having sex. And if you thought that case was just a one-time inconsistency, think again. Virtually the same scene appeared the next month in *Daredevil* #349, with Matt Murdock and Karen Page in bed.

One sex scene that didn't pass muster, though, came in *Justice League Task Force* #7, when the queen of a subterranean Amazon race fell in love with J'onn J'onzz, who had taken on a woman's form. The Code wouldn't allow the two women to be shown kissing—even though one was really male. Two consecutive panels showed their lips getting closer, but the third had to

be replaced with a shoulder-to-waist shot of the embrace.

On the other hand, that issue's writer, Peter David, was able to include a panel in the recent *Supergirl* #2 that showed a couple embracing from the waist down. The man's hands were grasping the woman's jean-clad buttocks, and the couple was standing over a woman's body with three knives sticking out of its back. So the reviewers concluded that you can't show two women kissing, but you can show a man grabbing a woman's buttocks over another dead woman with knives in her back. "When I write a story," David says, "I think about the fact that I'm writing for a PG or PG-13 audience and what the publisher deems permissible. I never consider what the Code might reject. I leave that to the editors to tell me."

Sometimes Code changes don't achieve their desired effect, notes Ron Marz, writer on *Green Lantern*. When Kyle Rayner's girlfriend Alex was murdered and stuffed into a refrigerator [*Green Lantern* (vol. 2) #54], the Code objected to the panel showing the dead body, which readers would have seen over Kyle's shoulder. The reviewers approved a redrawn version with the open refrigerator door blocking the view of everything but Alex's foot sticking out. "I can't believe how many readers have asked me if she had been dismembered," says Marz. "By the Code reacting as it did, it put a far more grisly scene into the readers' minds than what we intended to show."

The Code has definitely loosened up since the late 1970s, notes John Byrne, whose only problem with the Code occurred when he did *Uncanny X-Men* #124 (August 1979), which contained a panel where Storm was drawn swimming down and away from the reader. "This will be hard for current readers to imagine, but the Code said the scene showed too much of Storm's buttocks," he says. "I think they fixed it in the office."

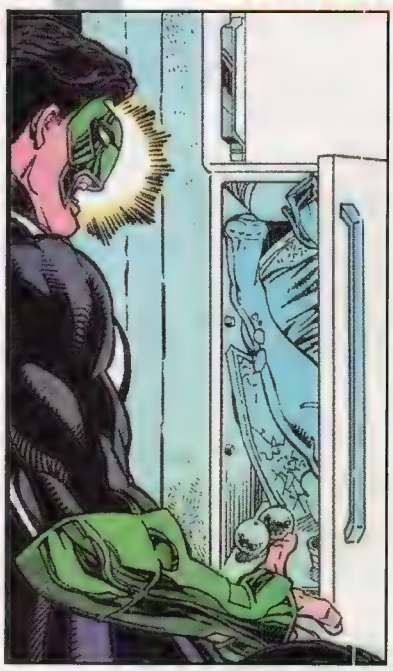
Ironically, there were two instances where Byrne's books were approved but failed to sport the seal. Due to an advertising banner in September 1980 that changed the cover's design, the seal was mistakenly left off *Uncanny X-Men* #137 and *Captain America* #249. By coincidence in those issues, Jean Grey and Machinesmith, respectively, took their own lives. "Fans still ask me if those weren't approved because they had suicides in them. So obviously some fans notice the disappearance of the Code seal from a book."

RATINGSSYSTEM

Even with more liberal scenes passing the Code today, it's possible some readers steer clear of Code-approved books, much as some moviegoers refuse to see G-rated movies. "I'd love to take the Code seal off *Wonder Woman* without changing the contents, to see if we attracted more readers," Byrne muses.

"I think the Code is a dinosaur that's served its purpose."

—KURT BUSIEK



Sometimes Code rejection can make a scene more gruesome (above), while other scenes curiously get the thumbs up (below)

A rating scale, similar to the one used by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) for movies, has been discussed several times by Code officials, Gorelick says, but no move has been made in that direction. "It's very subjective trying to place each comic into a specific category," he says in reference to G, PG or PG-13 movie ratings. "It's hard to decide how that will be monitored to be consistent."

BIG Entertainment, which is eliminating its ongoing comics releases this winter, had been using a three-label system for its direct-market books similar to that used by cable guides. The labels denote "Graphic Violence," "Mature Language" and "Mature Situations." These will continue to appear on the company's future mini-series and trade paperbacks as appropriate.

"We want direct-market readers and retailers to know the exact content they're receiving," says Ed Polgardy, BIG's editor-in-chief. "The labels show that the comic may not meet the Comics Code, but it might have only one mature component, such as violence and not sexuality, which may be more acceptable to that retailer."

Byrne is a vocal supporter of that approach. "I would love to see a rating system like that for all comics," he says. "It would say to everyone that comics aren't just for children and are intended for various audiences looking for different types of material. The greatest hurdle we face in this crazy business we call comics is the public perception that all comics are for kids. Something more mature comes along, and the great unwashed out there cries, 'Look at what they're trying to sell to our kids!' That's not what we're doing, of course, but we have no way of showing them that now."

Miller, on the other hand, argues that "Mature" labels only attract censors, who scoop up those comics when they're looking for ammunition to charge a retailer with selling obscene products. He says a comic's packaging and content should make it clear enough who the material is aimed at, pointing to the book market as an example of a literary medium where ratings aren't required to ensure the proper audience is located.

APAPERTIGER

Considering the Code's continually diminishing size, do readers even notice its existence? In fact, DC's current design reverses out the seal's background to allow cover elements to show through, leaving only tiny type. "I really wonder what purpose it serves in that form and whether any parent cares about it or knows what it means," says Byrne.

Susan Alston, executive director of the

"Tad Williams is a writer after my own heart."–NEIL GAIMAN

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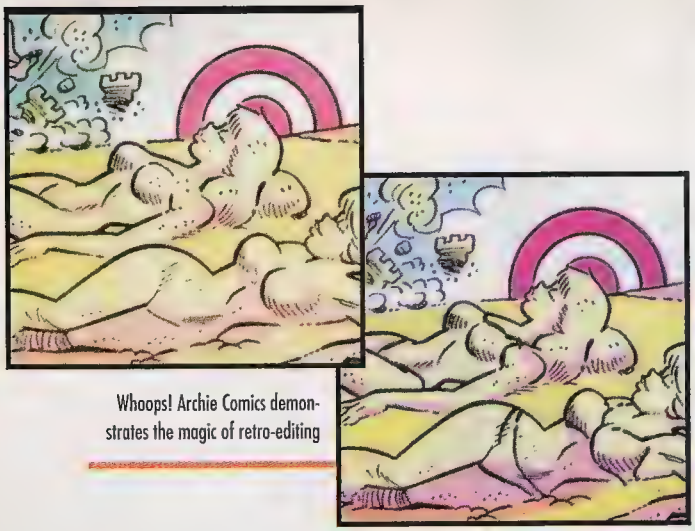

Whoops! Archie Comics demonstrates the magic of retro-editing

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, agrees that the Code has lost any power it once had. Her non-profit group supplies funds and legal services to retailers and creators to protect their Constitutional free-speech right to produce and sell comics. No prosecutor has ever used the absence of the Code seal as proof of a comic's "obscene" contents, she says.

The label doesn't say what it stands for, Busiek points out, in the way that "G" means "General Audiences." "I think the Code is a dinosaur that's served its purpose," he says. "Its goal was to reassure the public, but today the public doesn't know what the label means."

Silberkleit agrees that the seal needs a higher profile. "We've discussed doing a consumer promotional campaign, but there is nothing imminent," he says. "That takes time, money and effort, and it's hard to achieve that when we have such limited resources."

But that will change, he stresses. He sees the legal battles being fought around the country—especially the ongoing obscenity case against Planet Comics in Oklahoma City, where a local comic book shop was tried on charges of distributing obscene material—as bringing new attention to comics of all types. "Public opinion is a very powerful thing, and public-opinion shapers are always looking for notoriety," Silberkleit says. "If someone wants to go after comics, they could do it."

The Code may also grow because children's comics are growing, he argues, noting that more publishers are realizing the major mistake they've made in nearly abandoning the children's market in an effort to attract teenagers and older audiences. "If you don't have young kids reading age-appropriate comics, you're shooting yourself in the foot," he says. "You won't have an audience to read the older-age books when they grow up."

Such youth-oriented books require the Code, Silberkleit stresses, if they have any hope of expanding the market or being seen where parents buy comics: bookstores, mass merchants, grocery stores and airports.

Most creators, however, don't see the Code growing. And if the seal's size and public awareness continue to shrink, might newsstand distributors stop caring too?

"There's really no role for the Code in today's market," says Jurgens. "Society in general seemingly has advanced so far beyond the Code that it doesn't play a part anymore. But by the same token, I don't think the Code is an inhibitor of good work. We have to acknowledge that a lot of great stories have been written under the Code."

The question everyone must ask, though, is: Could they have been better *without* the Code? W

Craig Shutt, who gives you the skinny on Marvel's new Thunderbolts *series elsewhere in this issue, reads lots of comics not submitted to the Code each month and has suffered no ill side effects. Or so he thinks.* (EDITOR'S NOTE: For a copy of the current Comics Code, write to CMAA, 355 Lexington Ave., 17th Floor, New York City, NY 10017.)

CREATORS' VIEWS

Here's what some of today's top creators have to say about the Comics Code and its influence on their work:

John Byrne: "I expect the Code will disappear over time. It hasn't had any teeth for a long time, and you see the kind of [questionable] stuff that passes the Code office today."

Peter David: "I think the Code serves no practical purpose. It exists to censor in the name of protection. But the censorship is onerous, and the protection is highly questionable. If a storm of criticism fell upon the comics industry, the CCA would provide only the most tattered umbrellas of protection."

Warren Ellis: "Some of the world's greatest children's stories would not pass the Comics Code. Neither would much of the Bible. It was a poisonous, ridiculous idea when first mooted, and it's no better now. The Code is so incompetently administered that it frequently passes what it shouldn't and frequently censures what it shouldn't. However, a writer working on a book submitted to the Code always knows that people committing vicious beatings upon each other will always pass, and people making love won't."

Dan Jurgens: "It really doesn't play a role today. I'm aware I'm writing Superman and what that market is, where those comics are sold and what audience we're trying to reach. I know what's appropriate for him, so I don't think about whether the Code will allow something."

Don Kraar: "Kids can see stuff exceeding any comic book in a PG movie. Superhero comics are fiction of the extreme, and reactions should be extreme. I try to use stronger language than they allow me to, so I end up writing unnatural dialogue as a result of the restrictions. Most of our characters have cleaner vocabularies than most of our younger readers."

Mark Waid: "There's absolutely no place for the Code today. It's a toothless wreck that's very mercurial in its decisions. I never consider it when I write, but I know what the rules are." ■CS

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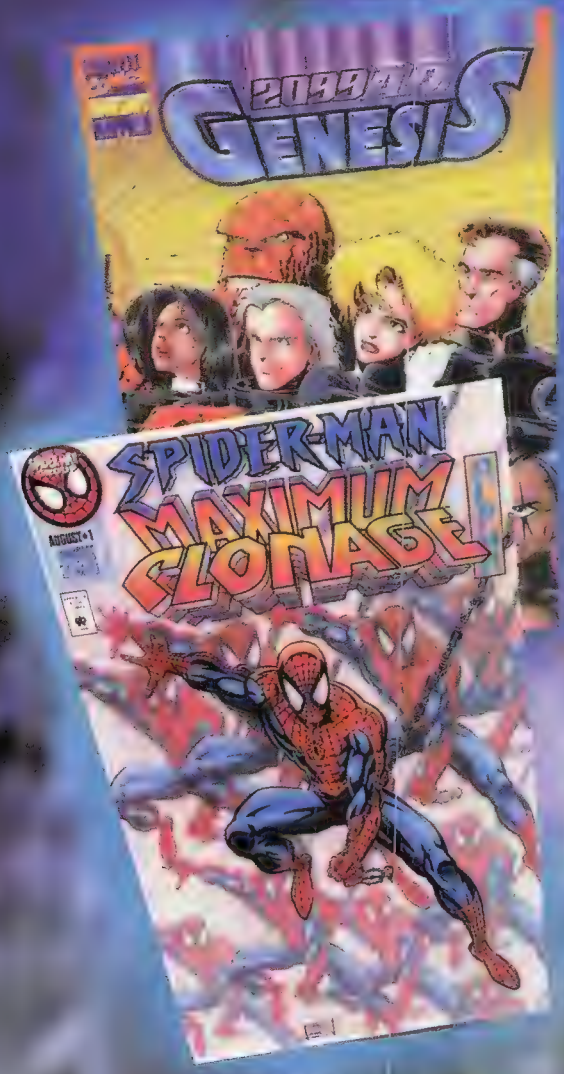

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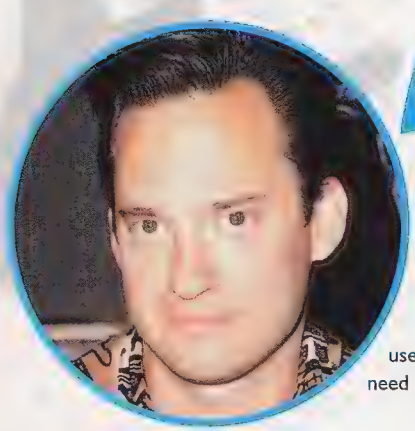
Basic Training

this month's host: Norm Breyfogle

How to Lay Out a Comic Page



Many people may think of laying out a comic book page as the first step in doing comics. No sir! It's actually the exact midpoint of creating comics, where the story and the art first come together on the page. A good layout artist must be both visually artistic *and* literate.

So, let's assume you or your brother's friends have cobbled together a script. Let's also assume you've learned to draw. From life. From your imagination. You've learned about light and shadow, anatomy, perspective and composition. You've studied art history. Been there, done that? Whew! You're impressive! Now you're ready to mix all of that together on the page in a layout.

All you'll need for tools is white bond paper, light and dark drawing pencils (I personally use a 6H for the lighter stuff and an HB for the darker) and a non-photo blue pencil. Oh, you need an eraser too, unless of course you're Jack Kirby.

PRIME/CAPTAIN AMERICA
Jones/Captain Strazewski
Submitted to Macchio December 7, 1995

PAGE ONE

1. Establish Washington DC at night (Washington Monument, etc), maybe with full moon.
SCROLL CAPTION: Washington, D.C.
CAPTION: The hub of American government on at least TWO worlds in the multiverse.

2. Medium shot: a silhouetted Captain America races toward the fence around the White House in deep shadow. A beam of moonlight illuminates the star on his shield. (He's outside the fence.)
CAPTION: On THIS world, on THIS night, a HERO moves stealthily toward the White House...

3. Cap starts to vault the fence. We see him clearly now.
CAPTION: ...the greatest PATRIOT in his reality.
CAPTION: Perhaps in ANY reality.

4. As Cap is still at the top of the fence, in the act of vaulting, there's an energy shimmer around him, wiping out the background.
CAP, THOT: What--?!

5. Cap drops down to the White House lawn, looking a little baffled. He shakes his head.
CAP, THOT: Felt disoriented for a second--a little dizzy!
CAP, THOT: Can't worry about that now. And I still have a...

6. Small close-up: Cap startled by voice behind him.
OP BURST: FREEZE!

FIGURE A

Reading is Fundamental

Read as much as possible of the entire script or plot first. You never know when a later page or issue may contradict something you drew on an earlier page or issue. Call your writers or editors if you have any questions or if you find errors and contradictions. (For the plot and panel sequence, #1 is panel one, #2 is panel two, etc.)

Also, make sure to gather references. If you're drawing Washington, D.C., you'd better not try to entirely *fake* the White House! The children's section of your local library is a great place to find photos and drawings of all kinds from around the world. Magazines and movies are another good source.

The Size of It

Decide what size you'll draw your layouts. Generally, a smaller size saves time by making it easier for corrections (rather than dirtying up the final art paper), and to see the entire page design at a glance. I draw my layouts at a size of 4" x 6" on regular white paper.

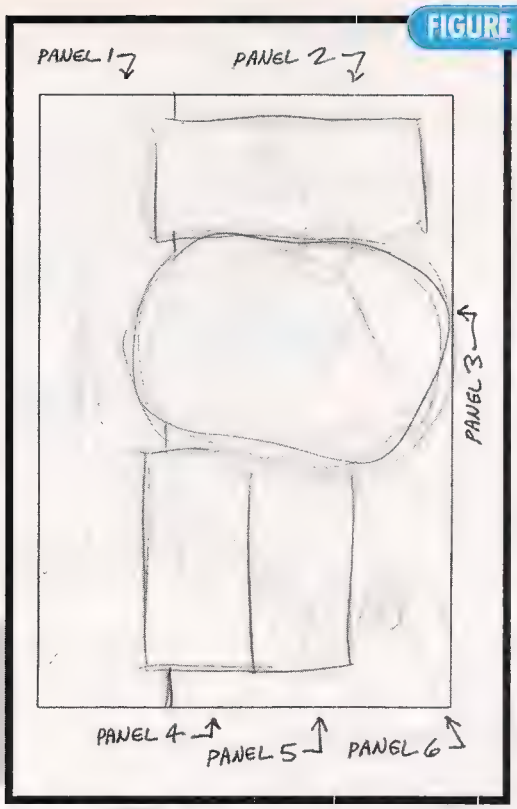


FIGURE B1

"I'm Ready for My Close-Up, Mr. DeMille"

Now you're ready to concentrate on an individual page. Visualize the scene or scenes in your mind's eye and choose which elements require the greatest "emphasis." Start roughing in panel borders with the 6H pencil by deciding how much of the page area you'll be devoting to each panel. Generally, a larger panel indicates greater emphasis. How do you know which panels to emphasize? Well, you basically have artistic license to decide which panel should stand out the most. Panel 3, featuring Cap, was the most dramatic shot on the page, so I drew it big, making as much room as possible by shrinking the other panels. Don't worry, you'll probably have to go back and erase a number of other panels until you're happy with the basic layout.

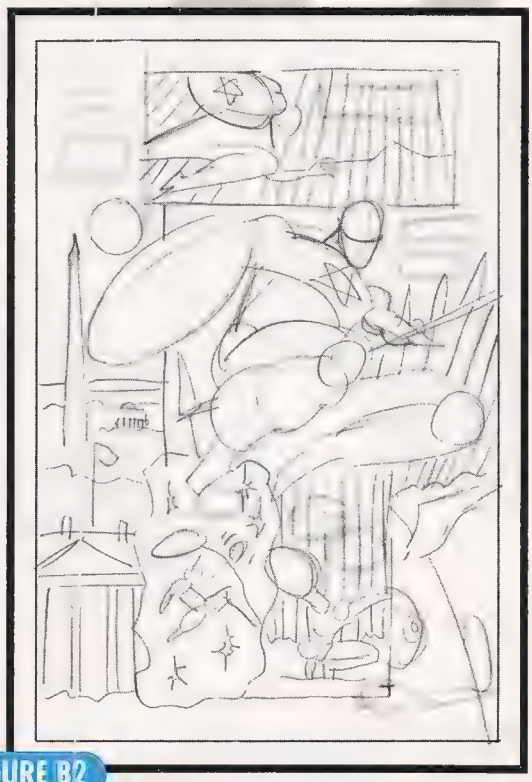


FIGURE B2

Keep Your Thumbnails Clean

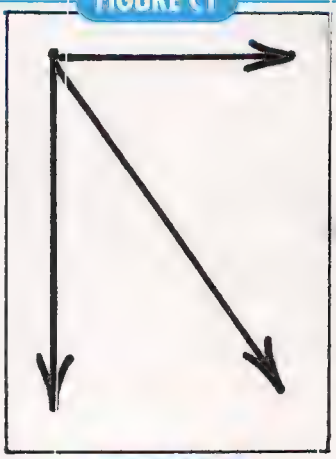
Here's where all those years of studying art start to come in handy. Still using the 6H pencil, begin drawing the general gestures of the objects and figures in your panels where your "visualization" of them is most clear.

You also have to sketch in captions and word balloons in blue pencil—the blue pencil prevents them from being confused with the drawing lines. Copy (a.k.a. words) should be considered part of the page design, since it takes up space. This is why I prefer working from a full script, as opposed to the "Marvel method" of creating the plot first, then the art, then adding the dialogue last. That runs the risk of having a large word balloon—which you didn't plan for—cover up important art and destroy the overall page design.

Easy Reader

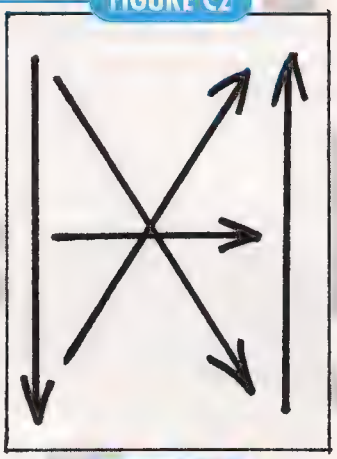
Strive for readability on a page and in individual panels. Readable storytelling is the mark of a good layout. Figure C1 shows the most readable paths for consecutive word balloons and captions. Figure C2 shows the most readable paths for movement in the art. Note that the art is more flexible in its range of readable paths than the copy (prose language is more formally structured than visual language), but a left-to-right movement is favored over right-to-left, because the story's inevitable end is always to the far "right" (i.e., the last page of the book). *Plus* your eye is trained to move from left to right.

FIGURE C1



PATH OF TEXT

FIGURE C2



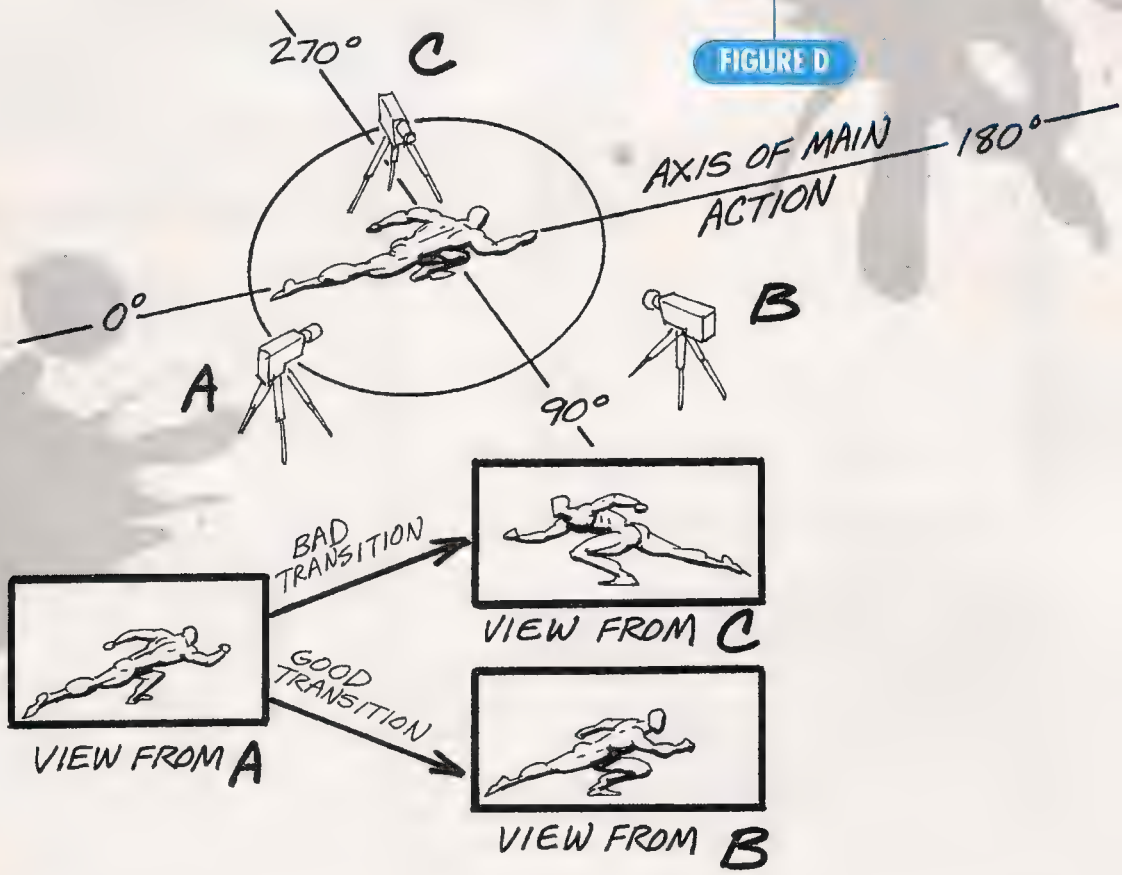
PATH OF ART

Turn Around, Real Careful-Like

Make sure you always observe the 180-degree rule. In transition between panels, don't cross the "axis of action" or you'll get a confusing "flip-flop" effect. It will look like all the action has suddenly reversed its direction!

For example, if you start your panel angle with Camera A (seen below), and swing counter-clockwise to Camera B, you don't want to continue over to Camera C. If you cross over from Camera B to Camera C, you reverse the direction of action, halting any sort of flow in your panel layout.

FIGURE D



Storytelling Rules

The trickiest part of laying out a page is actually deciding where to put everything. So, I racked my brain and came up with a number of storytelling rules (besides the readability and 180-degree ones) that I seem to follow both consciously and subconsciously.

✏ Establish the scene first or at least early in the sequence, so readers have a sense of an environment and know where the action is taking place.

✏ Copy (lettering) is part of design and must adhere to all storytelling rules.

✏ With superheroes/action-adventure: Draw as "big" and as "in your face" as possible (large figures, exaggerated gestures, foreshortening, etc.). It's more eye-catching and dynamic!

✏ Make sure characters look and act "in character." Pay close attention to body language. A layout artist must be an actor too! (Not to mention set director, clothing designer, etc....)

✏ Alter the script if it improves readability. Just be sure to get approval from your editor or the writer first!

✏ Use the right amount of panels per scene. Don't overuse splashes or quick cuts (jumping from one scene to another, then another)—they lose their emotional effectiveness if used too often. You'll discover your own rhythm or style as you gain experience on this point.

✏ Use weird panel shapes only if the script specifically calls for it (or you think the story does), and it doesn't decrease readability. I took this liberty in the fourth panel because the script mentioned an energy shimmer that wiped out the background.

✏ Be aware of—and use appropriately—similar and different "camera angle" sequences for different psychological effects. Check out the last panel on the page, where the close-up "camera angle" focuses the attention on Cap's state of surprise. Again, you'll develop your own rhythm in time.

✏ Overlapping panels can create an illusion of more space on the page. In panel three, Cap's body overlaps other panels on the page, helping to "open up" the entire page.

FIGURE E

Details, Details, Details

Since you've just gotten the main elements roughed in, this is the best time to make any changes to your layout design, to better make it fit your knowledge (reference, experience, storytelling rules, etc.). It'll be a lot harder to change anything (and it'll cost you more time) after you've gone to the final art paper. Now, I usually put a lot of detail in at this stage with the darker HB pencil. Since I enlarge my thumbnails with an art projector right onto the final art paper, this saves me time and effort that'd otherwise be required after I've enlarged the picture. Most artists, however, use thumbnails merely as a guide and then actually draw their page on the final paper. Whatever you choose, tighten up your pencils and don't forget those details.

FIGURE F

All Laid Out

And there you have it. Your finished piece on 11" x 17" bristol board paper, inked and everything. Now, there are many other ways to produce a layout that vary from my personal method. Arguably, however, most of the storytelling rules, although flexible, are pretty much universal. If you're an artist that cares about storytelling, the layout is the most important stage in drawing good comics, riding as it does on the razor's edge between writer and artist. A good layout artist is a good visualizer, a good translator of prose language into visual language, and a good bridge between the sometimes conflicting expressions of literature and art. Oh, and feel free to *break* most of these "rules" once you've truly understood them!

Dream big!

Norm Breyfogle, who's currently hard at work on an Anarky *miniseries for DC, likes to fantasize about what he'll be doing with the aliens after the upcoming pole shift and consequent collapse of civilization predicted for early next century. Yeah, he doesn't get out much.*

The Second Time Around Contest

CONTEST!

They say it's better the second time. In the case of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, they just might be right.

It's the 10th anniversary of *Dark Knight Returns*, and if you can do what *Dark Knight Returns* writer/artist Frank Miller did the first time around, you could walk off with one heck of a pointy-eared prize package!

How To Play

We want you to try to one-up Frank Miller (see, it's an easy contest) by doing what he did. Send in a drawing of a "Dark Knight-ized" DC Universe hero (except Batman). Age them by about 30 years, and change them for future times. Send in your drawing in any medium you wish, and make it good. Winners will be chosen based on quality and creativity and will win some...

TEN YEARS
-DARK-
KNIGHT™
RETURNS

...Outstanding Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive the *complete* Dark Knight Returns 10th Anniversary DC retail products package! That includes two posters, a T-shirt, a *Dark Knight Returns* hardcover, a slipcase hardcover set (limited to 10,000 pieces) and the Dark Knight Returns 10th Anniversary resin statue (with a suggested retail of $195)!

Second Prize (20): Twenty readers will each receive a Dark Knight Returns 10th Anniversary T-shirt and a Dark Knight Returns retail poster.

This contest is sponsored by DC Comics, and they *know* it's better the second time.

DC®

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Second Time Around Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.
Deadline is December 29, 1996.

Dark Legal Night

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, DC Comics, their immediate families or the six-jillion people who have ripped-off *Dark Knight Returns* #1's lightning cover. Enough already. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Second Time Around Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Maybe it's us, but them li'l batarangs Batman was tossing around in *DKR* looked a lot more painful then his big ones. (Yes, Batman has big ones.) **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 29, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on January 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Second Time Around Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Second Time Around Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 29, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

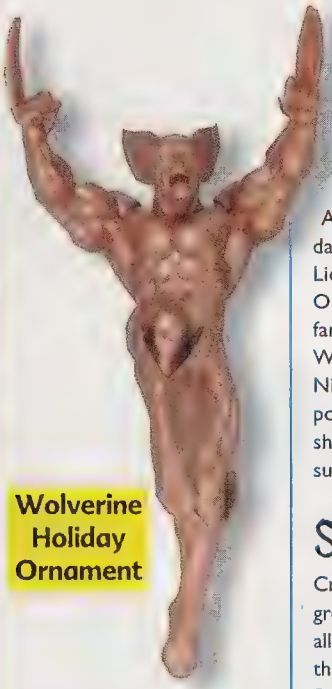
Phone Number (with area code) _____

Didja attach your art? Well didja?

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

by David Borak and the *Wizard* staff

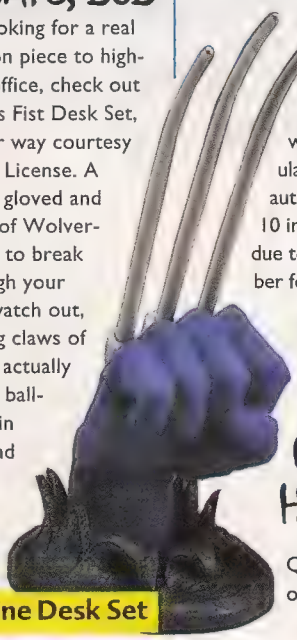


Wolverine Holiday Ornament

HAPPY FRIGGIN' HOLIDAYS, BUB

If you're looking for a real conversation piece to highlight your office, check out Wolverine's Fist Desk Set, comin' your way courtesy of Creative License. A 13-inch-tall gloved and clawed fist of Wolverine appears to break right through your desk! But watch out, his gleaming claws of pewter are actually replaceable ball-point pens in red, blue and black ink! (Proving that the pen really is mightier than the claw!) This limited-edition set comes with a certificate of authenticity. Look for it in specialty stores everywhere this November for $89.95.

Also in time for the holidays, look for Creative License's Wolverine Holiday Ornament to hang on the family tree. Watch as Wolvie slices and dices St. Nick with this cold-cast porcelain tree-trimmer. It ships in November with a suggested retail of $39.



Wolverine Desk Set

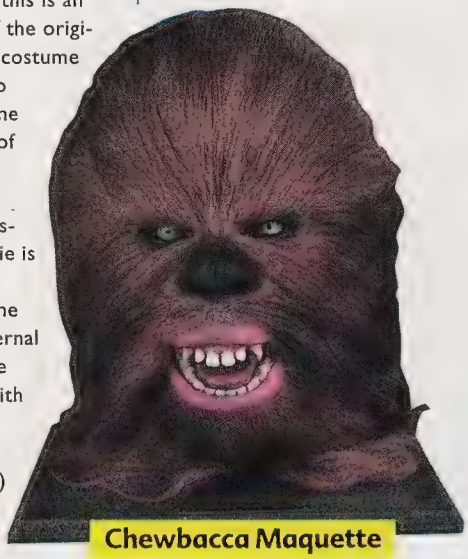
SURF'S UP

Creative License is offering a great anniversary present for all you Silver Surfer fans out there. Just in time for the Surfer's 30th Anniversary, look for the limited-edition cold-cast porcelain sculpture of the Silver Surfer riding a solid pewter board in a classic Jack Kirby pose. The individually numbered statue, complete with the ever-popular certificate of authenticity, stands 10 inches tall and is due to ship in November for only $200.

Silver Surfer Statue

GETCHER WALKING CARPETS HERE

Quite possibly one of the most frightening Star Wars products to be released this November is the Chewbacca life-size Maquette. This is a huge bust reproduction of Chewbacca's head made of foam-filled latex and (no joke) hand-laid yak and camel hair. Taken from the Lucas archives, this is an exact replica of the original Chewbacca costume and is limited to 7,500 pieces. The eyes are made of acrylic-based material, which gives the impression that Chewie is staring right through you. The mouth and external eye surfaces are hand-painted with eight different This huge bust (17" X 9.5" X 14") comes with certificate of authenticity and is mounted on a wooden base with a brass plate indicating the number of the edition. There is no suggested retail price as of yet, but start saving your pennies, 'cause yak hair don't come cheap!



Chewbacca Maquette

MINT-Y FRESH MARVEL

The Highland Mint recently released bronze and silver replicas of the cover of Marvel Comics' *The Incredible Hulk* #1. Now you can own a mint version of the comic book cover that made the phrase "Hulk Smash!" popular. These Mint cards contain 4.25 ounces of silver or bronze (24-karat gold in the gold-plated version which won't be released until the bronze and silver sell out) and are individually numbered. Each card is packaged in a numbered album with a three-piece Lucite display and a certificate of authenticity. Suggested retail prices for the cards are $50 for bronze (limited to 2,500), $235 for silver (limited to 500) and a whopping $500 for gold (limited to only 375).

In addition, The Highland Mint will also release a series of silver medallions featuring the X-Men. The first of these will be released in October, with one per month released through February 1997. Look for Wolverine first, followed by Cyclops, Gambit, Rogue and Storm. They feature the character's mug on one side, and their bio on the reverse. Each silver medallion will be limited to 5,000 pieces with a suggested price of $19.95. Each medallion comes packaged in a hard plastic capsule and velvet jewelry box, which can be used as a stand.

Product of the Month

GRAVEYARD SMASH

Chaos! Comics' favorite bad boy Evil Ernie returns this month in a limited-edition, cold-cast porcelain statue of the Master of Annihilation himself! Poised for megadeath, with knife in hand, Ernie awaits his next victim in the Endless Graveyard. Crafted in nightmarish detail by Clayburn Moore, Ernie stands on a 14-inch base of tombstones and skulls, and comes fully hand-painted in his own-color collector's box. Limited to just 2,500 pieces, Ernie retails for $175 from Moore Creations and will be available in December.

A PIECE OF THE FORCE

Holy Han in carbonite! Check out Willitts Designs' exclusive Star Wars Collector Film Frames, currently available in stores. These are the actual 70MM film frame originals from the movie, which are hand-cut and mounted onto an acrylic holder (with a die-cut window for your viewing pleasure). No two film frames are alike! And if that ain't enough, each holder contains individual artwork and behind-the-scenes photographs about the frame pictured. In addition, you'll see facts about your frame and the characters in it. Each film frame comes with a registration card and unique serial number, and is certified with the official Star Wars holographic seal. "Star Wars" and "The Empire Strikes Back" frames are currently available, with "Return of the Jedi" ones arriving sometime in 1997. They're suitable for trading and cost only $24.99 apiece. For more info, visit Willitts Designs' website at **www.willitts.com**.

Star Wars Collector Film Frames

MARVEL GOES DOWNHILL

This winter, you and your friends can slide down mountains in style with Marvel Snowboards featuring your favorite Marvel characters! Each of these fully functional snowboards depicts original artwork by a top Marvel creator. There's Wolverine by Adam Pollina, Human Torch by Andy Kubert, Green Goblin by John Romita Jr. and Captain America by Ron Garney. (For some reason, the Silver Surfer was left out! What were they thinking?!) These snowboards are currently available in sporting goods stores for a whopping $299 each.

Marvel Snowboards

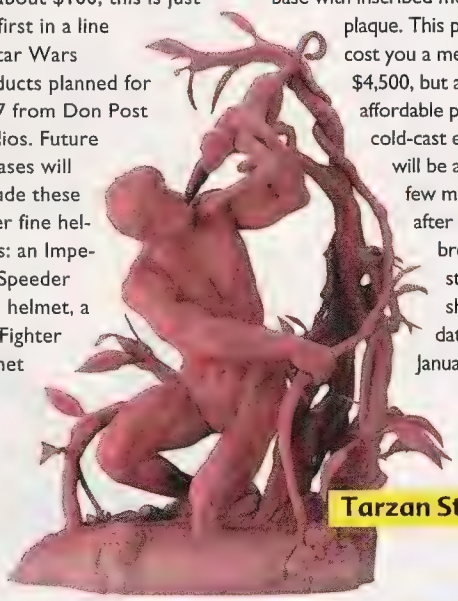
Boba Fett Mask

BOBA FETT? WHERE?

The Great Coverup, Inc./Don Post Studios brings us this funky reproduction of Boba Fett's Mandalorian helmet, recreated in rigid plastic, with a smoked viewplate and moveable antenna. Retailing for about $100, this is just the first in a line of Star Wars products planned for 1997 from Don Post Studios. Future releases will include these other fine helmets: an Imperial Speeder Bike helmet, a TIE Fighter helmet and an X-Wing Fighter helmet. For more info on these and other keen Don Post Studios products, check out the company's website at **http://www.thegreatcoverup.com**.

ME, BRONZE TARZAN, YOU BUY!

The definitive Tarzan sculpture has arrived! Sculptor Joe DeVito has adapted an original design from the late Burne Hogarth to create a bronze sculpture of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Lord of the Jungle himself. Produced as a limited-edition of just 100, each bronze Hogarth Tarzan measures over 14 inches in height and is mounted on a marble base with inscribed metal plaque. This puppy'll cost you a mere $4,500, but a more affordable painted cold-cast edition will be available a few months after the bronze statue's shipping date in January 1997.


Tarzan Statue

HEY! Are you a company putting out some peachy keen comic-related merchandise like Captain America salt-and-pepper shakers, Wolverine carving sets and Hawkman 12-pound oven roasters? (For Thanksgiving, of course!) If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like posters, novels, T-shirts, sculptures, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

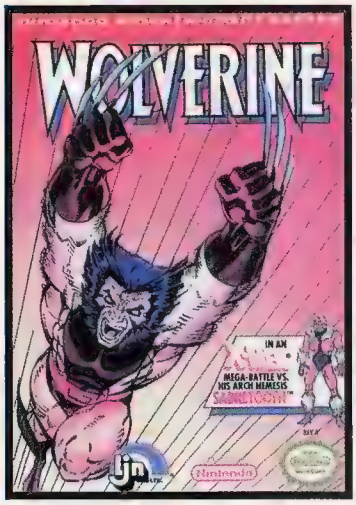
Let the X-Games Begin!

Of all the superhero and comic-based video games ever made, Marvel Comics' band of mutant heroes, the Uncanny X-Men, have had the strongest track record of all. With complex themes of prejudice, isolation and sacrifice, Marvel's mutants, at first glance, would seem to be untranslatable into a video game format. But given the popularity of the Fox animated series and the Toy Biz action figure lines, not to mention the comics that spawned them, it was only a matter of time before Xavier's band of mutants started to shine in the video game arena. For the most part, video game programmers ignored the intellectual aspects of the X-Men and focused on a more "militant soldier" angle. Given the limitations of the video game genre, the X-Men were stripped down to the bone.

IN THE BEGINNING...

In 1990, Nintendo's 8-bit machine was clearly king of the hill, and many third-party companies were frantically searching for characters and intellectual properties to turn into video games. The superhero video game had yet to prove itself as a money-maker. A then small development house, LJN (now Acclaim), purchased the rights to produce Marvel's *X-Men* . The game itself isn't as common as it was just a few years ago—most domestic 8-bit titles have been wholesaled off overseas. Bearing that in mind, $10 is the most you'll have to pay for a copy. The storyline of *X-Men* revolves around X-villain Magneto and his plans for world domination. Basically, it's an overhead maze game with the ability to interchange between the different members of the team: Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Cyclops, Colossus and Storm.

As a part of the licensing deal, LJN owned video game licensing rights to Wolverine. 1991 saw the release of a solo Wolvie game with Sabretooth as the main antagonist. An early precursor to the side-scrolling genre, the 8-bit NES *Wolverine* has nine levels and guest stars Jubilee, Havok, Psylocke and Magneto. This game saw a limited release and is much harder to find than LJN's earlier effort. Expect to pay at least $15, if you can find one.



SEGA'S TURN AT THE MUTANTS

The latter two X-games sold marginally well for LJN, but it wasn't until Sega took over the mutant rights that the X-Men earned

Sega's *X-Men*

themselves a blockbuster. Over two million copies of the 1993 Sega Genesis 16-bit *X-Men* were sold, easily making it the best-selling X-Men video game of all time, which forever solidified the superhero video game as a profitable genre. *X-Men* redefined side-scrolling adventure games—it's format has been ripped off so many times, the programmers should get royalty checks. *X-Men*'s cast included Cyclops, Wolverine, Gambit and Nightcrawler. Other Marvel mutants were featured in cameo/power-up roles including Storm, Archangel, Iceman, Jean Grey and Rogue. The game featured five levels with tough bosses: Magneto, Sabretooth, Deathbird, Mojo and Juggernaut. Sega's *X-Men* is a fairly easy buy at $15, and it's well worth it.

CAPCOM'S RARITY

In 1994, SNES finally got an X-Men game when Capcom released the strange fighting/adventure hybrid, *X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse*. Once again, you could only play one X-Man at a time. Despite playability flaws, the graphics were well done and the characters emulated the originals. Interestingly enough, a very rare and non-cataloged promo comic was released to game reviewers only. The comic has an original story and came with an equally scarce T-shirt. *X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse* was a victim of the 1994 chip shortage and is tough to find—expect to pay about $35.

SNES SNIKT!

Although Capcom had the rights to the X-Men, Acclaim retained rights to a solo Wolverine title, *Wolverine: Adamantium Rage*, which was released for both 16-bit systems. Again, the SNES version is tougher to find and more expensive (SNES games cost 40% more to manufacture). Though graphically above average, gameplay was way too advanced for the casual gamer. Foils for Logan included such *Wolverine* and *X-Men* comic villains as Trevor Fitzroy, Shinobi Shaw, Sabretooth, Lurker, Albert, Bloodscream and Lady Deathstrike. $20-$30 is an average price to obtain this one.

SEGA SEQUELS

In 1995, Sega ripped itself off by releasing a sequel to its groundbreaking X-game with *X-Men 2: Clone Wars*, which added little to the original. This time, Phalanx and Apocalypse were the villains. Released before the rise of the next generation 32-bit machines, *X-Men 2* sold merely average and was closed out for as little as $20. Available only on the Genesis, this game featured the first foil-embossed video game packaging. Also of note are two GameGear releases, *X-Men I* and *X-Men II: Gamemasters Legacy*. Both games feature fantastic graphics, but don't play too well on the small screen.

Given the popularity of the X-Men, it's a good bet we haven't seen the last of Marvel's mutants. Imagine a *DOOM*-like X-Men game or a fully rendered 3-D Danger Room—the possibilities are endless. In the meantime, *X-Men: Children of the Atom* is currently available on the Sega Saturn (with a PlayStation portover in the works!), at a suggested retail of $45.

HIDDEN CHARACTERS IN *X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM*

Here's a neat li'l trick for *X-Men: Children of the Atom* that you can use to impress yer friends. Go to the character select screen, move the character select icon to Spiral and wait three seconds. Then move the icon over the following characters without stopping: Silver Samurai, Psylocke, Colossus Iceman, Colossus, Cyclops, Wolverine, Omega Red and Silver Samurai. After stopping on Silver Samurai, wait three seconds and then press A+C+Z at the same time. If done correctly, a picture of the *Street Fighter* series' Akuma will appear. A code also exists for the Japanese version that allows access to Magneto—we'll try and dig up a comparable American code for a later column.

PLUG IN.

The Latest in Video Game News

STAR WARS INVADES THE PLAYSTATION!

Finally, LucasArts is porting over two of its mega-popular PC titles onto the 32-bit format: *Dark Forces* and *Rebel Assault II*. *Dark Forces* is a richly detailed 3-D environment *a la DOOM*. As Rebel special Agent Kyle Katarn, you navigate through 13 complicated, multi-level worlds and harness an arsenal of weapons including blasters, ion guns, thermal detonators and assault rifles in order to destroy the Dark Trooper. Featuring actual "Star Wars" locales and characters, *Dark Forces* also has new planets and ships exclusive to the game. *Rebel Assault II* is an action/arcade style game set in the Star Wars Universe. *Rebel Assault II* also features 3-D graphics, live-action video *and* the first new Star Wars footage since "Return of the Jedi." Flight and ground combat stages keep everything fresh. LucasArts has actually upgraded the PC version both graphically and in its soundtrack. Both titles are due to hit stores in early 1997.

THE TOY CHEST

KENNER STAR WARS NEWS FLASH!

Greedo

Momaw Nadon (Hammerhead)

Death Star Gunner

Luke in Stormtrooper Disguise

Sandtrooper

Jawa two-pack

Attack R5-D4

Tusken Raider

Those fine folks at Kenner just confirmed that the late 1996 additions to the Star Wars Power of the Force line would *definitely* include the following new figures, so forget everything you've read before: Sandtrooper (formerly Tatooine Stormtrooper), Death Star Gunner, Greedo, Luke in Stormtrooper Disguise, Attack R5-D4 Droid (formerly Attack R2-D2), Tusken Raider, Hammerhead and a Jawa two-pack featuring Jawas in two sizes, each with light-up eyes! Previously (in *Wizard* #63's "Toy Chest"), Kenner listed the Jawa two-pack as not intended for the 1996 releases. Yay, Jawas! Guard your droids, kids!

And if these slammin' additions to the line weren't enough, Kenner also reports that a new vehicle will accompany the figures: the T-16 Skyhopper, the ship in which Luke honed his flying skills by hunting womprats in Beggars' Canyon on Tatooine!

Expect all figures and the T-16 Skyhopper to begin showing up in toy aisles in December.

MORE STAR WARS 12-INCHERS

Hasbro New Ventures recently confirmed that the third series releases for the Star Wars 12-inch action figures will include Princess Leia, Boba Fett, Luke Skywalker in X-Wing Pilot Uniform and a Stormtrooper. Like the first series' Darth Vader, both Boba Fett and the Stormtrooper come with non-removable helmets. And if you've had trouble finding the first series' Ben Kenobi figure, keep lookin'—he's the short-packed one.

PLAYMATES MAKES "FIRST CONTACT"

With "Star Trek: First Contact" warping into theaters this November, Playmates is all set to release another Star Trek line to coincide with the second feature film starring the cast and crew of "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

First up is a brand-new assortment of action figures from the movie, including Captain Jean-Luc Picard, Commander William T.

BY **SCOTT BEATTY**

PLAYMATES' "FIRST CONTACT" ACTION FIGURES (from left): Picard in Starfleet Spacesuit, Capt. Jean-Luc Picard, Cmdr. William T. Riker, Lt. Cmdr. Data, Lt. Cmdr. Worf, Zefram Cochrane, Cmdr. Deanna Troi, Lt. Cmdr. Geordi LaForge, Lt. Cmdr. Data (not currently in production), Dr. Beverly Crusher and The Borg.

Riker, Lt. Commander Data, Dr. Beverly Crusher, Lt. Commander Geordi LaForge, Lt. Commander Worf, Commander Deanna Troi, The Borg, new characters Zefram Cochrane and Lily Sloan, and Captain Picard in Starfleet Spacesuit.

Like other Playmates Star Trek figures, each comes with its own Starfleet action base and assorted accessories. There's also a "Star Trek: First Contact" movie mini-poster packed inside—all for an estimated retail price of $5.99-$7.99.

In Playmates' 9-inch action figure line, expect five additions, including Captain Picard, Captain Picard in 21st Century Civilian Outfit, Commander Riker, Lt. Commander Data and Zefram Cochrane. Each figure comes with individual accessories, a Starfleet action base and a "First Contact" movie mini-poster. Estimated retail for each is $14.99-$15.99.

TOY BIZ HEAVY METAL

By the time you read this, Toy Biz's latest offerings, X-Men: Mutant Armor and Spider-Man: Armor Wars, will be hitting the toy shelves. X-Men: Mutant Armor sports the very first Quicksilver figure in an assortment that also includes Crystal Armor Iceman, Heavy Metal Beast, Anti-Magnetic Armor Wolverine and Astral Armor Professor X.

In Spider-Man: Armor Wars, check out Hyper-Tech Spider-Man, The Vault Guardsman, Radiation Suit Spider-Man, Ultimate Octopus (That's Doc Ock, kiddies!) and Anti-Symbiote Spider-Man—which arrives with its own li'l symbiote!

And in Toy Biz business news, the company has named Alan Fine to the new position of Chief Operating Officer as part of Toy Biz's strategy of strong growth, product diversification and international expansion.

Toy Biz also reported recently that its X-Men with Light-Up Weapons assortment from 1996 opened as the No. 4 best-selling action figure assortment in units at mass merchandisers, according to the latest data available from the Toy Retailer Sales Tracking Service. Due to the favorable response, as previously reported (*Wizard* #61), Toy Biz will re-deco its light-up Psylocke figure to be its first Elektra figure, who's gone from appearances in the *Wolverine* comic book to her own ongoing series from Marvel Comics! Accompanying the sai-wielding assassin will be a light-up Wolverine in his original "tiger shark" costume. Both figures should be available in time for Christmas!

NEW BEHEMOTHS FROM MCFARLANE TOYS

With an already impressive assortment of scary hellspawn and other creatures under its belt, McFarlane Toys is busy adapting a new line of action figures—this time based on classic movie monsters! Slated for release in April/May 1997 and retailing for two to three dollars more than other McFarlane Toys offerings, the initial "Movie Monsters" series will include Frankenstein, Dracula, the Wolfman and the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

But don't expect just a simple action figure. Packaged like a certain popular model series of the 1960s, each "Movie Monsters" figure arrives with its own display stand, accessory character and additional features to make an instant diorama. Frankenstein comes with a spare head, removable brain and limbs, his own laboratory set and table, and "Igor."

The Wolfman's playset includes an outdoor scene with a hollow tree and path, in addition to "Steve the Victim," an unlucky hunter outfitted in blaze orange and action-ready with removable limbs—which can be hung from a hook on the tree...eww.

Dracula has his own gothic mansion scene, complete with an archway and candleabra, and an accessory bat (of course).

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Classic X-Men (X-Men)

[illegible]

2) Princess Leia as Jabba's Slave Girl (Star Wars)

[illegible]

3) Superman Wedding two-pack (Superman)

[illegible]

4) Onslaught (X-Men)

[illegible]

5) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)

[illegible]

6) Jean Grey (X-Men)

[illegible]

7) Imperial Snitch—Garindan (Star Wars)

[illegible]

8) Dark Knight Returns two-pack (Batman)

[illegible]

9) Cyrano Jones (Star Trek)

[illegible]

10) Kaine (Spider-Man)

[illegible]

Drop! We've spoken and the toy companies are listening! Some of the figures we've plugged have already gone into production! Your votes count! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

X-MEN: MUTANT ARMOR—FEATURING THE FIRST-EVER QUICKSILVER FIGURE!

TOY BIZ'S LATEST SPIDER-MAN ASSORTMENT: ARMOR WARS

And appropriately, the Hunchback arrives in a tower scene with bells and ropes for the figure to hang from. This one also has shooting gargoyles (go figure), and an "Executioner" antagonist to stomp all over Quasimodo's self-esteem.

In other McFarlane Toys news, expect an action figure line to coincide with the release of the live-action "Spawn" movie, slated to hit theaters in August 1997.

And finally, McFarlane Toys has launched its own McFarlane Toys Collector's Club, open to collectors of all ages, and offering mail-order figures, special edition toys, contests and newsletters.

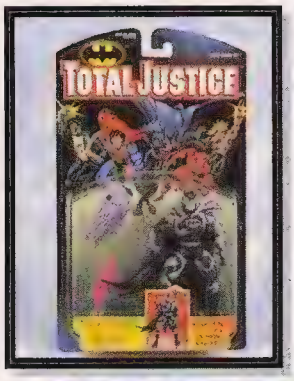
HOLY SUPER POWERS, BATMAN!

With a planned number of DC Comics superhero characters that will hopefully rival the mid-'80s Super Powers line, Kenner announced that the second series of Batman: Total Justice figures will include four exciting new characters, each with its own "fractal techgear" accessories and action: Superman (who's already pictured on the card-front art) with Kryptonite Ray Emitter, Despero with Galactic Body Blow Attack (once again a villain), Hawkman with Massive Grip Talons and a new Fractal Armor Batman with Optical Shoulder Cannon System.

REIGN OF THE SUPERMEN!

If you haven't caught the WB network's brand-new animated "Superman" series, you're missing out on some classic superhero action done up in that cool "Batman: The Animated Series" animation style. And just like "Batman: TAS," Kenner is serving up a whole action figure line devoted to the series. Already in stores are the following action figures: Capture Net Superman, Quick Change Superman, Deep Dive Super-

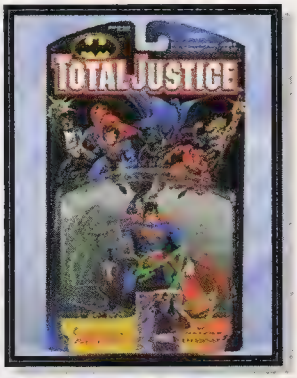
KENNER'S NEW TOTAL JUSTICE FIGURES



Fractal Armor Batman with Optical Shoulder Cannon System

Despero with Galactic Body Blow Attack

Hawkman with Massive Grip Talons



Superman with Kryptonite Ray Emitter

Quick Change Superman

Lex Luthor

Evil Alien Brainiac

man, Neutron Star Superman, Brainiac, Lex Luthor, Solar Energy Superman, Krypton Shield Superman and Darkseid. Each of these figures has an approximate retail of $5.99.

A deluxe figure assortment will include: Speeding Bullet Superman, Vision Blast Superman and Techno Armor Superman. Also available in the animated line is a transforming Matrix Conversion Coupe that comes with an exclusive Clark Kent figure and retails for $24.99.

Currently, the previously released Superman: Man of Steel action figures are available in a "Buy One, Get One Free" offering through all toy outlets, to clear room for the cool new animated "Superman" figures. W

Scott Beatty taught college classes until he started skipping them to make weekly G.I. Joe shipments, and announcing grades as Casey Kasem.

ToyFare

Molten Man comes to life in this exclusive ToyBiz/Wizard offer. Limited to 7,500 pieces, it will never be made available anywhere else...ever! The only way to get him is through the Wizard ToyFare special. Full of the latest toy industry news, it's the mag no fan can go without! There, enough of the sales pitch. Go buy one.

ON SALE NOVEMBER 13th

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of these talented creators will receive two 5-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figures. The Runner-Up will also get a 10-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figure, and the Grand Prize Winner flies home with all that stuff *plus* a Toy Biz Marvel model kit. Awesome work, people!

Thanks to the folks from Toy Biz for their generous donation of prizes. You guys are the sprinkles on our sundae!

GRAND PRIZE

KINGDOM COME
Lewis J. Greene II of Oxon Hill, Md.
Cool! Touching up a recent Kenner Superman figure, an animated Batman figure, a Toy Biz Genesis (GL) and a McFarlane Toys Spawn I (Hawkman), Lewis has created a wonderful rendition of the mini-series, perfect for a toy line. (Unfortunately, we have no idea what the Bat-Knights were made from.)

RUNNER-UP

BACKLASH
Michael A. McCaughey of Sewell, N.J.
This Backlash may want to avoid using his energized tendrils, for it might melt the Super Sculpey that he was hand-sculpted from. Michael added a little wire and, pow, a beautiful Backlash.

FLASH
Scott Halcomb of Ballwin, Mo.
Flash was made from a Mego Captain America doll head, a Mego Spider-Man body and a hand-sewn costume.

SPEED DEMON
Mike Karsten of Bramoton, Ontario, Can.
This Amalgam figure is a mix of a Toy Biz Vengeance's head, a Toy Biz Ghost Rider II's arms and a Toy Biz Blaze's body and legs. For a nice touch, Mike added the cotton in the background to show his smokin' speed.

KANEDA
Phil and David Albritton of Evansville, Ind.
Taking a Toy Biz Peter Parker body and legs, the arms and boots from the Nedry figure in Kenner's Jurassic Park line and the head from some figure we can't figure out, the popular manga hero is ready to trounce some Akira ass.

MONKEYMAN
Arthur Chew and Walden Wong of San Francisco, Calif.
Like this month's Backlash figure, Monkeyman was created with Super Sculpey, and the detail does Monkeyman creator Art Adams proud!

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

Just a Girl

Megan Kelso mixes superhero fiction and personal reality in the innovative Girlhero

Odds are, when you ask most cartoonists in the industry if they were comic book fans as kids, they'll tell you they grew up on a steady diet of comics and not much else. That's not the case with *Girlhero* creator Megan Kelso. Her first big exposure to comics, aside from the occasional *Archie* at a slumber party as a child, was when a college boyfriend gave her a copy of *Love & Rockets*.

"A light bulb went off in my head," the 28-year-old Kelso remembers. "I had always been torn between whether I wanted to be an artist or whether I wanted to do something with writing. But with comics I saw that you could tell stories using both, and there was no choice to be made. I had a 'Wow! I could do this!' feeling, especially when I read stuff by Peter Bagge (*Hate*, *Neat Stuff*) and others who didn't necessarily draw in a traditional, realistic way."

Perhaps it's Kelso's lack of immersion in comic books that makes her work so fresh and distinctive. With so many comics on the racks full of stiff art and boring panel layouts, *Girlhero* stands out due to Kelso's attention to how each page is composed of panels that work together as a whole. Because she is unfamiliar with the traditional conventions of comics, Kelso is also able to come up with innovative uses for panel borders, sound effects, word balloons and other cartooning devices that most artists take for granted.

Kelso also realizes another way in which her unfamiliarity with the particulars of comics makes her work unique. The continuing story in *Girlhero* is "Bottlecap," a tale about three superpowered female characters on the run from an evil corporation. "When I started 'Bottlecap,' I was completely clueless that in the alternative world of comics, superheroes are just anathema—everyone hates them and abhors them and looks down on them. I was doing comics in a vacuum, so it was a while before I realized that I had picked the stupidest subject ever for my comic."

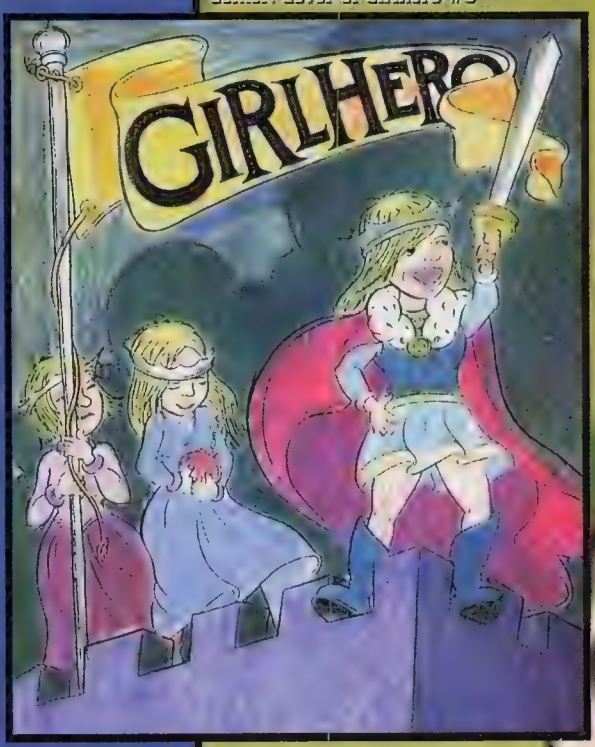
Despite the initial response, Kelso decided to continue "Bottlecap." Having started the story in the first issue of *Girlhero* in the summer of 1993, the Seattle-based Kelso is set to complete the tale with the forthcoming sixth issue of her comic. "I stuck with it because I realized there was more going on in the story than superheroes, so that became less and less of the focus," she says. "The later episodes have tinges of it, but it's not the main thing that's going on. A lot of cartoonists start off with these grandiose epics and get bogged down. That definitely happened to me, but I have just been really stubborn and decided to stick it out."

Even though she's chosen to complete "Bottlecap," Kelso hopes that readers pay closer attention to the self-contained stories that make up the other half of *Girlhero*. Unlike "Bottlecap," these short stories are mostly grounded in reality, with occasional touches of fantasy. But just because her short stories are realistic doesn't necessarily mean they're completely autobiographical. "A lot of times they have some sort of autobiographical kernel," Kelso reveals. "Often times it's not even something that happened to me, it's something that didn't happen to me or I try to imagine something that would happen to me. There's this tiny little seed and then I just embellish it a lot with stuff that probably never happened."

One of Kelso's short stories, "The Married Man" (a tale from *Girlhero* #4 about a janitor named Liz who falls for a married man), offers a curious mix of autobiography and fantasy. "In my day job I'm a janitor," Kelso reveals. "My janitorial job is a bit different from what I depicted in the story, so even that part is not totally autobiographical. Anyway, I developed this ridiculous crush on a married guy."

In Kelso's comic story, Liz pursues her interest in the married man, but Kelso's own story is a bit different. "The crush was totally unrequited. I don't think he even knew I

Below: Color sketch for cover of *Girlhero* #6
Center: Cover of *Girlhero* #3



by tom palmer jr.

had a crush on him, but I gave it tremendous amounts of energy and thought. Could I ever do something like that—get involved with someone who's married? It was a ridiculous question, because he never even knew I had a crush on him. I was so obsessed that I really thought through the entire relationship. The story came from the fact that I had spent so much time and energy thinking about this stupid thing and thought, 'God, I should do a story about this. I've already planned it all out.'"

"The Married Man," like Kelso's other short stories, is a carefully planned and nicely executed story, but there's one aspect of *Girlhero* that Kelso hasn't planned in detail. She's fairly certain that she's going to abandon self-publishing and find a publisher for her work, but she's not sure if she'll start a brand-new comic or just continue to plug ahead with *Girlhero*. In the past, Kelso has been the recipient of a grant from Xeric, the foundation created by *TMNT*'s Peter Laird for fledgling self-publishers.

Below: Bottlecap testifies in *Girlhero* #4
At right: panel from "The Married Man" in the same issue

While the future of her comic is uncertain, you can rest assured that it doesn't look like Kelso will have a shortage of ideas for stories, no matter where they appear. "I've never really sat around and thought, 'Oh my God, what am I going to do? What story am I going to do next?' That hasn't happened yet, and I really hope it never does." W

Tom Palmer Jr. grew up with comics around all the time. His parents once used copies of Brother Power: The Geek *to diaper him when they ran out of Pampers.*

FYI

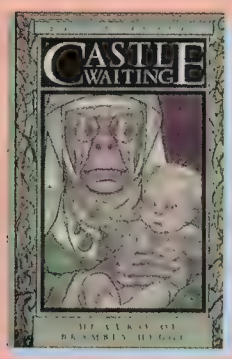
Girlhero is self-published through High Drive Publications, and the sixth (and possibly final) issue should be out around the beginning of December. Write to High Drive Publications, 4505 University Way NE, Box 536, Seattle, WA 98105 for a $3 sample issue or for information on back issues and other items (like posters and T-shirts). Kelso also plans to put together a book collection of her short stories from *Girlhero* and anthologies like *Action Girl Comics* and *Dark Horse Presents* in the near future.

Megan Kelso's Recommended Reading

"Here are some people whose work I really love that deserve more recognition: *Jennifer Daydreamer*, a mini-comic by Jennifer Daydreamer herself. Jen has a beautiful sense of line and composition, and her stories are like dysfunctional fairy tales. *Silly Daddy* by self-publishing sensation Joe Chiappetta, one of the few guys in comics doing mature autobiographical stories. *Mojo Action Companion Unit* by Marc Bell, who specializes in wacky industrial machinery and improbable hot rod cars, as well as some semi-autobiographical stories. *The Catbox Room* by Lisa Maslowe, a burgeoning new mini-comic talent and an excellent storyteller. Gabby Gamboa, who is concentrating on doing short stories in anthologies like *Duplex Planet*, *Murder Can Be Fun* and *Top Shelf*."

Recommended Reading

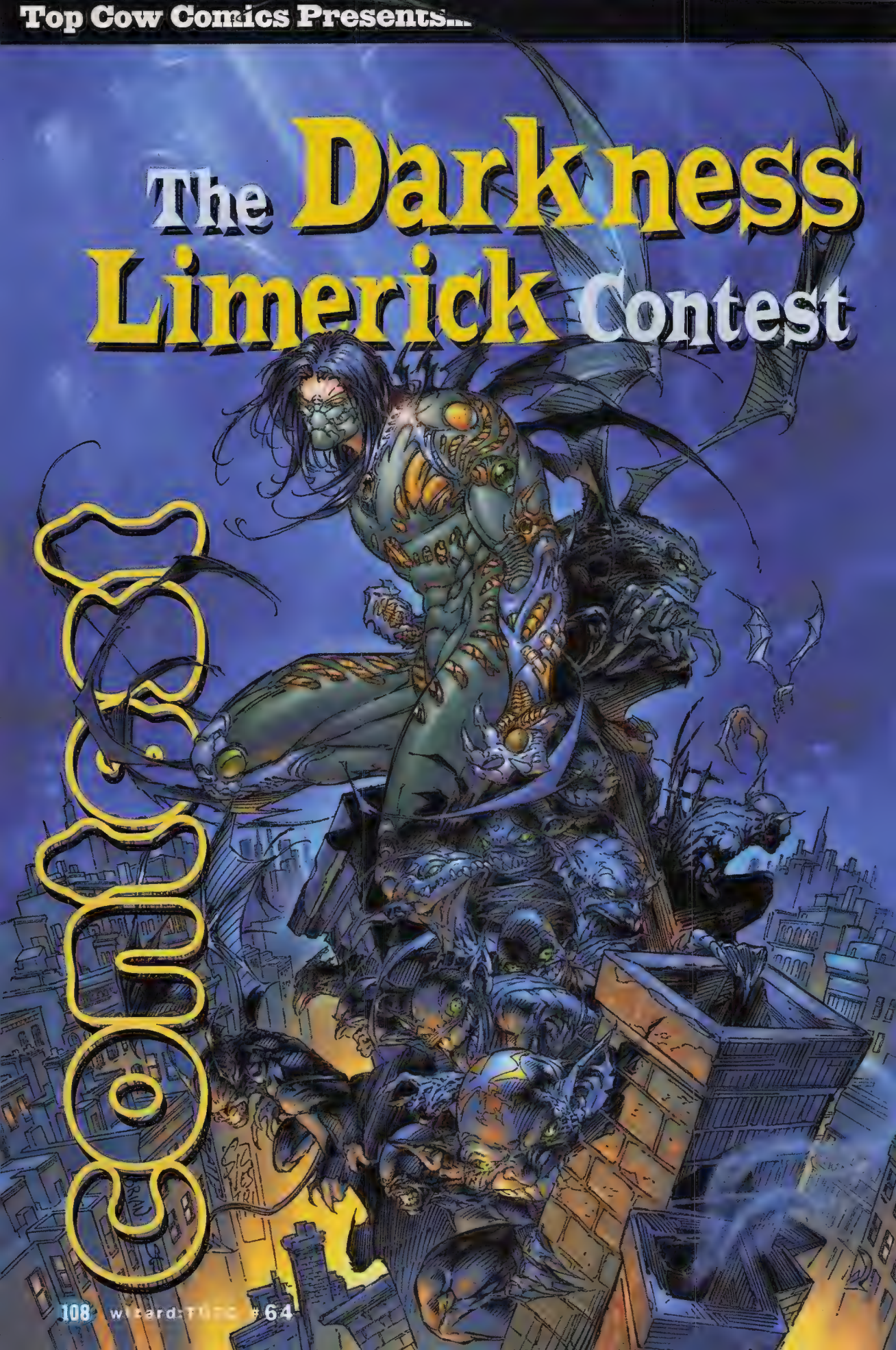
Castle Waiting Not many comics come around with a debut as delightful and beautifully executed as *Castle Waiting* by Linda Medley (*Justice League*, *Doom Patrol*). *Castle Waiting: The Curse of Brambly Hedge* (left), an introductory graphic novel, is out in stores now, and a regular series is set to begin in February. You'll be sorry if you miss this wonderful comic. Write to Olio, PO Box 1012, Petaluma, CA 94953-1012.



SpiderBaby Comix This new series collects stories by Stephen R. Bissette before he became famous for his work on *Tyrant*. Each issue features classic stories like "Cell Food" and "The Tell-Tale Fart," as well as extensive historical notes and a few surprises. Look for the first issue of *SpiderBaby Comix* in November, or write to SpiderBaby Grafix and Publications, PO Box 442, Wilmington, VT 05363.

Espers and **The Age of Heroes** Writer James D. Hudnall (*The Psycho*, *Hardcase*) has revived his science fiction/espionage thriller *Espers* (right) with new artist Greg Horn and started *The Age of Heroes*, a fantasy comic, with artist John Ridgway. Both of these bi-monthly comics have terrific art and well crafted stories. Pick up either one (or both) of these books if you're looking for a satisfying read. Contact Halloween Comics, 16350 Ventura Blvd., Suite 351, Encino, CA 91436 for more info.

The Darkness Limerick Contest



The Darkness **is coming. Top Cow Comics' sure-to-be-a-hit launches this November with the tale of an ancient evil power which is used for good for the first time in the hands of Jackie—an immortal hitman searching for his perfect mate. But why should *The Darkness* have to be so...dark? Maybe you can lighten it up a bit and walk away with some delightfully dark prizes for your effort.**

How To Play

Darkness creators Marc Silvestri and Garth Ennis want you to lighten up *The Darkness* a bit. And seeing as how Ennis is an Irishman who appreciates a good limerick, he'd like to see you submit an original limerick ("a light or humorous poem of five lines," according to Merriam-Webster) about *The Darkness*. Here's an example:

"There once was a power most dark;
Thought up by a man name of Marc;
When scripted by Ennis;
A writer quite the menace;
You know the book is a lark."
Okay, lousy example, but you get the idea.

MARC SILVESTRI

GARTH ENNIS

Delightfully Dark Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One reader whose limerick is judged best will receive an original Garth Ennis script to *The Darkness*. And just 'cause co-creator Marc Silvestri doesn't wanna be left out, he'll even do a little Darkness sketch on the first page!

Runner Up (10): Ten readers whose poetic abilities are still plenty keen will each receive copies of *The Darkness #1* and *The Darkness Preview* autographed by Garth Ennis and Marc Silvestri.

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS, INC. ™

This contest is sponsored by Top Cow Comics, defenders of all high-altitude bovine collectibles.

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Darkness Limerick Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is December 31, 1996.

Dark Legalness

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Top Cow Comics and their immediate families, or anyone who starts their limerick with the line "There once was a man from Nantucket." Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Darkness Limerick Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Screw with this contest and Garth and Marc's come over and flush your houseper. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or incomplete entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press and Top Cow Comics. Judging will take place on January 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Darkness Limerick Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The Darkness Limerick Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

Spawn® Comes Back...

...that's what Spawns do.

The best-selling comic book series of the 90s.
The best-selling card set of 1995.
In August, Spawn comes back to
WildStorm Productions for
SPAWN CHROMIUM®

Art by Greg Capullo

Art by Todd McFarlane

A new 90 card Chromium® set featuring new art by Todd McFarlane, Greg Capullo, Kevin Conrad, Tony Daniel, Jim Lee, J. Scott Campbell, Humberto Ramos, Adam Hughes, Aron Wiesenfeld, Richard Bennett, and many more.

Subsets of Todd McFarlane's favorite Spawn® images and a cover gallery from Spawn®, Violator®, and Angela®.

9 motion cards and 1 full-motion morph card!

Spawn®, its logo and its symbol are registered Trademarks™ 1996 and copyright© 1996 of Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. Chromium® SGW, Patent #4,933,218; #5,082,703; #5,106,126

THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

GEN13

Does this teen titan's quality match its popularity?

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: WildStorm/Image
Creative Team: Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly (kinda)
The Good: *Gen13* is a fun book, plain and simple. And that's because of one thing: characterization. These kids are just darn likable. And whether it's Burnout's goatee, Grunge's George Clooney coif, or the team's innate fashion sense, they're all pretty hip. What's more, they talk like teenagers should talk and do what teens do—play video games, skateboard, go mall-hoppin' and just...hang out.

As for the art, J. Scott Campbell is the *perfect* artist for this book, and he's improving each issue. He's got a quirkiness to his style, but he's also very dynamic in his storytelling. Plus, he's the only artist we know of that made Jim Lee look *bad* (Lee's art in issues of *Gen13* actually looked awkward when compared to Campbell's).

Yes, there are a lot of "T&A" shots (see "The Bad"), but the creators recognize this by having the characters actually make fun of that fact (see below art). Joe Chiodo's coloring really does stand out as well.

Finally, *Gen13* has something that few comics have today: strong female leads. Fairchild, Freefall and Rainmaker are easily the strongest personalities of the team, and that's a refreshing change.

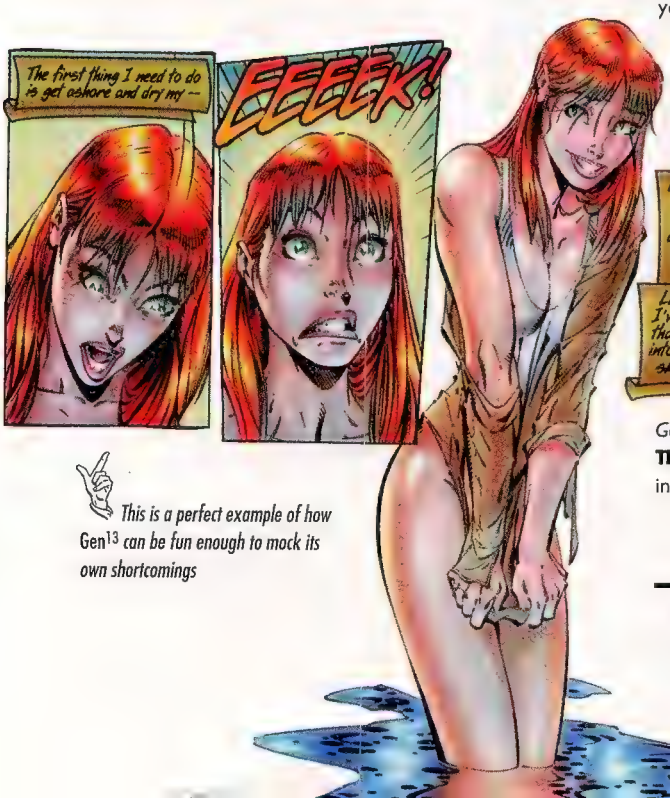
The Bad: While the characters themselves are enjoyable, the bulk of the stories so far have been somewhat hokey and predictable. Also: the crossovers (especially "Fire from Heaven" in issues #10 and #11) completely stop the flow of the series. (And while crossovers are generally bad, "Fire from Heaven" happened to be *real* bad. *Gen13* was the sole bright spot in the crossover.)

A major problem with the series, though, is that it isn't reader-friendly for new fans. It assumes you've already read the *Gen13* mini-series and know everything about these characters. What's needed are some more name-dropping, story recaps and explanations of everyone's powers.

As previously mentioned, there are way too many "babe" shots. (Don't these girls believe in wearing bras? And is it always 20-degrees below zero? Yeah, we all like to see gorgeous gals, but this is a bit excessive.) Also, the language can be sometimes crass and inconsistent. They'll say such things as "jerk off," "bitch" and "riding the crimson wave" (like we really needed to know the latter anyway), but instead of writing "ass" they used "@$$" in issue #7. Seems tame compared to the others.

The Buzz: *Gen13*'s been going strong since its inception, but can it sustain the heat with spin-off books *Gen13: Bootleg* and *DV8* hitting the racks now?

The Skinny: Despite its problems, *Gen13* is still a fun read. Just imagine how great it'd be if these problems were fixed!



This is a perfect example of how Gen13 can be fun enough to mock its own shortcomings

The Verdict: 4

JLA

This team book is finally given some justice

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Regular Creative Team:: Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly
The Good: Seeing Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Flash, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter all working together is impressive enough. (When was the last time the JL saw a decent roster like that? *Legends* #6 in 1987?) But seeing them work well together in a tense story is awesome. And that's what we get here.

Surprisingly, Grant Morrison has nailed the characters dead on. The heroes' attitudes and dialogue match how they're portrayed in their current titles, which is rarely pulled off with such perfection. Morrison uses the individual members' strengths and weaknesses in just the right way. (Batman fans will especially enjoy this book. That's all we'll say.) The dialogue doesn't bog the reader down when it's not needed, and the story moves swiftly.

The basic plot, while hokey, has everything you'd want a team of all-powerhouses to face (a group of superpowered aliens), and Morrison's treatment of it is exciting enough for you not to mind it as much. Plus, it's very refreshing to read the last page of the first few issues and get a cliffhanger exciting enough that you abso-friggin'-lutely can't wait to get the next one.

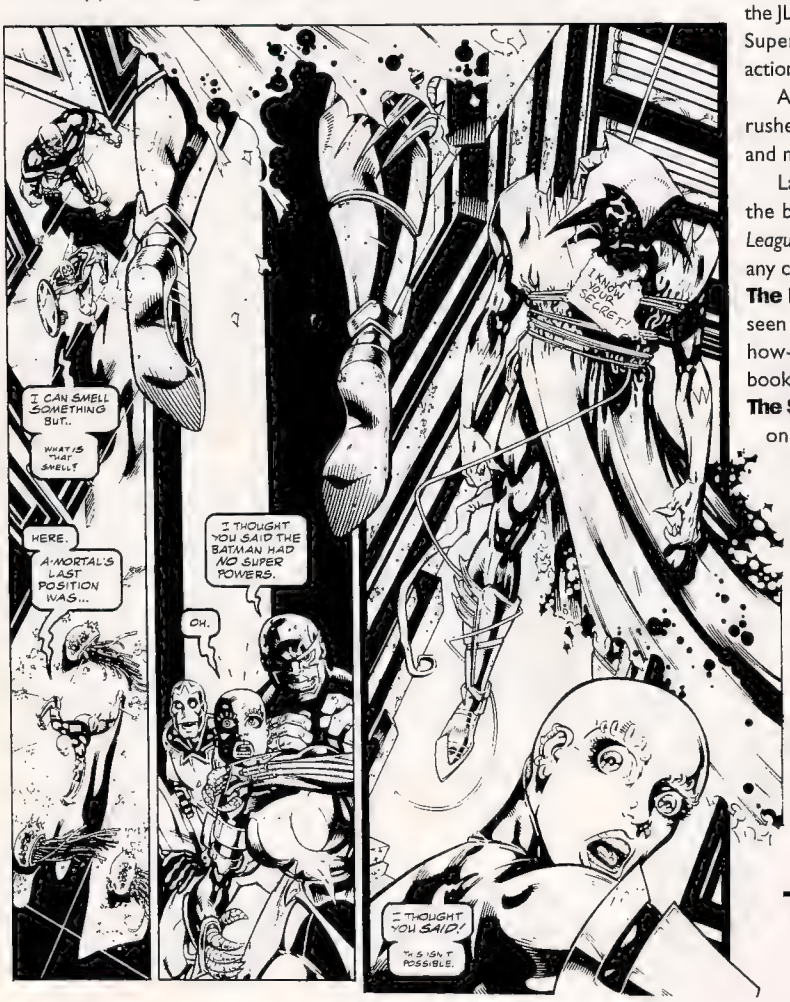
The Bad: The plot is just what you'd want to launch such a powerhouse book, to a fault. It quickly becomes clichéd and unoriginal (you can see a little of "Independence Day," *Kingdom Come*, "Die Hard" and every generic alien invasion story you've ever read in here). Plot holes run rampant in order to keep the story moving. (For example, when the aliens pull shenanigans on a global scale, why are the JLA members conveniently unaffected? Why is Superman's attitude about some of the aliens' actions a little out of character?)

At times, the story moves too swiftly and feels rushed. There are a few fight scenes off-panel, and many others are only a page or less long.

Lastly, we're forced to ask why the name of the book is *JLA*. What's wrong with the *Justice League of America*, arguably the most impressive of any comic book title?

The Buzz: When you've got DC's all-star cast—seen together for the first time in who-knows-how-long—done by a good creative team, this book will get people's attention. Bank on it.

The Skinny: The problems in this book should last only as long as the introductory story we're given to launch the series. With the perfect characterizations and exciting storytelling, we're looking forward to reading this book like nothing else.



If you think this scene from JLA #3 is intense, just wait until Batman actually shows up!

The Verdict: 5

DAREDEVIL

Finding a great superhero read isn't blind luck anymore

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel
Regular Creative Team: Karl Kesel, Cary Nord and Matt Ryan
Price/Frequency: $1.50/Monthly
The Good: Not many writers can give a book a genuine lighthearted feel when you're dealing with superheroes, but Karl Kesel definitely pulls this one off. The jokes fit in with the overall mood since the drama is never overblown.

We're back to basics with real people and real problems (Matt's boss is manipulating him, the Foggy Nelson/Matt Murdock friendship is strained because Foggy's hurt that Matt never told him he was Daredevil, etc.), and the subplots (Karen Page taking a job as late-night radio host, which happens to be a station owned by the Kingpin) unfold at a good pace. You're genuinely interested in what's gonna happen next.

Kesel also manages to bring the "justice is blind" concept back into play in *DD* (which serves an important role in the series since Matt Murdock is a blind lawyer in the justice system). A prime example of this is the fact that Matt defends Mr. Hyde, a known killer who should rot in jail, from a murder he didn't commit. Plus Kesel never lets you forget that Daredevil *is* blind with various one-liners and scenes (seen below).

One other point: The art by Cary Nord is rough at times, but shows great potential by not being the style-of-the-month. Also: his covers give a straight-forward representation of the story inside—something that covers have gotten away from lately. (For example, if Daredevil fights Pyro in an issue, like #355, he's fighting him on the cover).

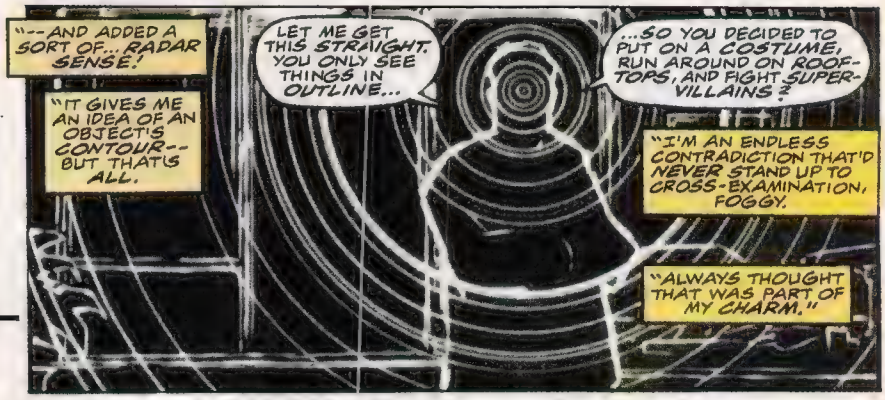
The Bad: There are two ways that the lighthearted feel of *Daredevil* goes wrong. First and foremost, the Daredevil character reads too much like a wise-cracking Spider-Man. In fact, in the issue where the two meet (*Daredevil* #354), their dialogue has the exact same style to it and is ultimately interchangeable. Secondly, Matt Murdock is way too casual with the fact that he's Daredevil. In one scene in #354, Matt's walking around his office wearing the costume minus the mask; Foggy then walks in to be shocked—and so is the reader. You'd think that after the last time someone found out he was DD (his world was shattered as the result of it in the classic "Born Again" story) he'd be a *little* more careful with it.

The Buzz: Rumor has it that this book might be farmed out of Marvel to Marc Silvestri's Top Cow studio, or even canceled. To shake up this book in any way would be the biggest mistake Marvel's made since they took the successful Mark Waid and Ron Garney team off of *Captain America*.

The Skinny: This book has suffered for so long that it's refreshing to see that it's become one of the best superhero reads out there. It's extremely reader-friendly, especially for new readers. If you haven't already, pick up a copy.

Above: Kesel gives Matt Murdock a perfect sense of morality

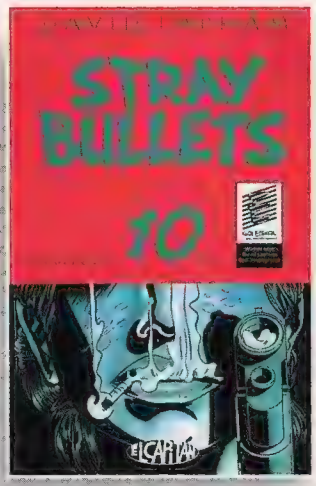
At right: A more blatant reminder from Daredevil #353 that DD is blind



The Verdict: 5

STRAY BULLETS

It's a crime this 'Pulp Fiction'-esque book has problems



Genre: Crime/suspense
Publisher: El Capitán
Regular Creative Team: David Lapham
Price/Frequency: $2.95/Bimonthly (kinda)
The Good: Just about the only thing *Stray Bullets* has in common with *Sin City*, is that they're both black and white…and have guns. Instead, *SB* is much more like "Pulp Fiction" in its intricate weaving of dark and often times violent tales. The best thing about *Stray Bullets* is that every issue is a single, stand-alone story. However, if you read 'em all together (we recommend reading them in all in one sitting to fully enjoy all the neat little intricacies) they manage to connect on a much larger scale. With its stark reality and natural dialogue, this book has a really nice realistic feel to it. It's almost as if David Lapham actually lived through all these experiences, taking notes while dodging bullets. And with tons of twists and subtleties, you don't just find yourself reading *Stray Bullets*, so much as *participating* in it.

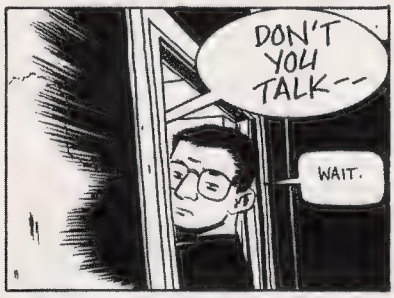
The black-and-white style works great to set the mood, and Lapham's art, while a bit sloppy and rushed at times, is generally honest. It's refreshing to read a comic that doesn't glamorize or glorify its protagonists. And *Stray Bullets* has plenty of protagonists, seeing as how the series' main characters are different every issue.

One last point: the letters page is just as in-your-face as the rest of the book. Lapham holds nothing back and is an equally enjoyable read writing fan responses.

The Bad: The worst thing about *Stray Bullets* is that it's inconsistent. The first few issues were pretty good, some were great (like #4), others were okay, while a couple were pretty bad. The Amy Racecar stories (#6 and #10) seem very awkward in this series, and don't seem to fit in with the rest of Lapham's tales. Hopefully they're part of some grand scheme, but right now, without the big picture, they fall very short. Also, most of the endings are pretty hard hitting or at least ironic or funny, but a few just leave you hanging without giving enough of an explanation of what just transpired, as well as giving closure to the issue.

The Buzz: With his recently erratic schedule on the last few issues, there really hasn't been too much buzz about *Stray Bullets* lately. Now that Lapham appears to be back on track, that'll hopefully change.

The Skinny: While it is a bit inconsistent, *Stray Bullets* is a great thinking-man's book. But be warned, it's the kind of book you'll either love or hate, depending on your own personal taste. So if you're into *crime noir*, suspenseful, character-driven-type stories, give this one a shot.



Stray Bullets' situations are so intense that you'd swear Lapham has experienced them

The Verdict: 4

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PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN NOVEMBER

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #2

THE BLACK LAMB #3

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

AQUAMAN #28

DC COMICS The guy who made tuna out of Porm, Aquaman's adoptive mother, is still hiding out in Japan. But the only way Aquaman can back up his demand to extradite the murderer is to regain control of Poseidonis, the undersea city that the aliens control. Sound tough? S'probably why he asks his old JLA buddy, J'onn J'onzz for an assist. By Peter David, J. Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.95**

ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #4

IMAGE How cool would it be if you were a teen sidekick? (No fair asking Bucky, Jason Todd or any of the Bratpack.) Well, that's just what one kid dreams about in the start of this six-part storyline. So he collects his belongings and sets off for Astro City, the coolest superhero place around. There he gets a job in a superhero bar hoping to find some supehero-type who he can pal around with. By Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson. **$2.50**

BATMAN #538

DC COMICS After trailing Man-Bat to the Arctic, Batman (hey...maybe he'll wear his Arctic-Chilly-Mukluk armor like one of Kenner's God-awful Batman figures!) discovers that the human side of the Man-Bat is gone, and he's more than willing to eat anything that gets in his way. By Doug "Hey...my mucus froze." Moench, Kelly "My tunge's tuck to ta tole." Jones and John "Turkey's done!" Beatty. **$1.95**

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #2 (OF 13)

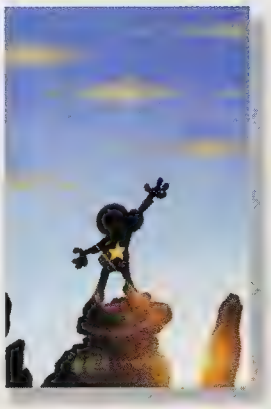
DC COMICS This early tale in Batman's history sees the serial killer Holiday stalk Gotham City and kill a group of criminals on Thanksgiving. Meanwhile, Batman's got his hands full trying to track down an assassin whose target is D.A. Harvey Dent (who was black in the first Batman movie and white in the third. Powerful acid, eh?). But along the way, Bats finds a bigger, stronger and stranger problem...Solomon Grundy! By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

THE BLACK LAMB #3 (OF 4)

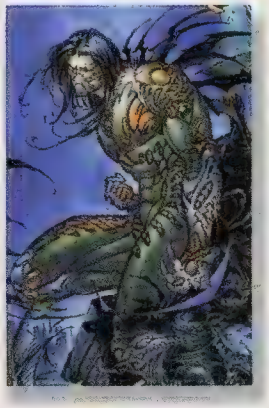
HELIX/DC The Black Lamb is trapped inside an Iron Maiden (All right! "Six, Six, Six! The number of the beast, hell and fire were spawned to be released.") and, while he's bleeding to death, he recalls just how he became the Black Lamb. The poor guy knows he's gotta escape to defeat the werewolf Lykaon, but he's having a rough time figuring out how to do it. By Timothy Truman. **$2.50**

BLOODY MARY #4 (OF 4)

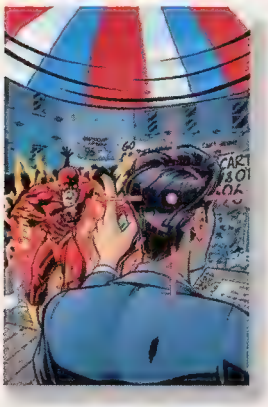
HELIX/DC It's the final battle between Mary and Anderton, the former team leader turned parasite-enhanced villain (Plot Twist!), and it's gonna be one to remember. Only one of 'em is gonna walk out of the rubble alive, but is Mary ready to give up everything just for the sake of vengeance? Plus, a special appearance by that wacky assassin, Vatman. By Garth Ennis and Carlos Ezquerra. **$2.25**



BONE #27



THE DARKNESS #1



THE FLASH #121

GREEN LANTERN #82

BONE #27

IMAGE When last we saw Phoney Bone, he and a group of villagers were off to kill a dragon. Now we get to see if all of his planning'll make that possible. Things aren't as simple as they seem. He and the villagers are in for quite a surprise, especially when the sun comes up. By Jeff Smith, who says, "This is the issue that the entire story has been building to for the whole year. What's going to happen is that Phoney Bone leads [the villagers] to believe that he's gonna slay a dragon. Well, he accidentally stumbles across and captures the real dragon, so now he's forced to hold his sunrise sacrificial ceremony. He's standing there in this Stonehenge-type circle and the sun's coming up between the rocks...there's the dragon he's captured and he's gotta sacrifice him. He's gotta do something [laughs]. The entire town is watching him." **$2.95**

DAILY BUGLE #2 (OF 3)

MARVEL It's gonna be bad news for J. Jonah Jameson when he starts distorting the facts to save his reputation *and* a friend's. Plus, get to see just how frightening Betty Brant's life is, as her trip into the underworld draws her ever deeper into danger. By Paul Grist, Karl Kerschl and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #360

MARVEL Even if it means dropping a title from your must-read list every month, you've got to find a way to add *DD* to your pile of books. The creative team of Kesel and Nord have brought this book back from the cesspool it's been wallowing in for the last few years—making it one of the best superhero comics being published, period! This ish: with all the big Marvel heroes dead, it's up to Daredevil (with his fairly limited superpowers) to defend New York against the Absorbing Man (he of Thor-level superpowers). Should be brief. By Karl "The King of Sting" Kesel, Cary "The Master of Disaster" Nord and Matt "The Sultan of Swat" Ryan. **$1.50**

THE DARKNESS #1

TOP COW Mafia hitman Jackie Estacado had a good, but not terribly complex life—lots of money, lots of women, hot cars. Yeah, he had to kill a few people now and then, but that was all part of the package. But when he's given The Darkness—incredible power and immortality—things get a little...difficult. By Garth Ennis, Marc Silvestri, Batt and Steve Firchow. **$2.50**

DC/MARVEL: ALL ACCESS #2 (OF 4)

DC COMICS Jubilee convinces Access to bring her to the DC Universe so she can finish up some business she had with Robin (insert your own "Bat-pole" joke here). Plus, see Daredevil, Two-Face and lots o' other Marvel/DC heroes/villains running around together like chickens with their heads cut off. Also check out issue #3, also available this month, where Batman and Dr. Strange try to figure out what the hell's going on, *and* the X-Men and JLA face off against one another! Woo-hoo! By Ron Marz, Jackson Guice and Josef Rubinstein. **$1.95**

DETECTIVE COMICS #705

DC COMICS What do you get when you cross a Dark Knight with two clue-leaving villains? A really bad '70s flick starring Don Knotts and Tim Conway? Close, but no. You get Batman stuck in a war between the Riddler and Cluemaster. By Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan and David Roach. **$1.95**

THE FLASH #121

DC COMICS "Presidential Race," Part 2 (of 2). Flash has to make a tough choice—trust his friend Piper, who thinks a

HOT PICK!

ROBIN #37

DC COMICS Hey, it's rough being a teen hero, especially when you gotta give up your night life to go catch some stupid villains. After pulling off a robbery, the Toyman and the General (two pretty pathetic villains) dash off to their secret mansion hideout. Being the good crime-fighter that he is, Robin trails them and gets trapped inside! And it seems they were ready for him, 'cause he's gotta make his way through all the deadly pre-set traps and toys. (Imagine a room full of Bananas in Pajamas singing "We're Bananas in pajamas..." endlessly. *Shudder*) By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. Dixon says, "It's a lot of wacky toy action. Toyman and the General have allied to steal a tremendous toy collection, hoarded away by a fellow toy geek, a multi-millionaire in Gotham. Robin wants to put both of them away and hopefully catch up to them before Toyman kills the General, who's really getting on Toyman's nerves. Robin's gonna be all by himself. There's sort of like miniature perils [in the house], but they're still dangerous." **$1.95**

presidential candidate is really a reincarnated villain, or stop Piper before he does anything crazy. The situation quickly comes to a head as Wally must choose what's right before someone gets killed! By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. Waid says, "The Piper is on the outs of the law again because he knows or *thinks* he knows that the Presidential Candidate is actually the Flash villain The Top come back to life. Nobody is willing to believe him except maybe Wally—and Wally's choice may or may not affect the election of the highest official in the land. We also have some old, not long forgotten characters showing back up in the "Presidential Race" story that will continue to plague Flash in the months to come." **$1.75**

GENERATION X #23

MARVEL Black Tom Cassidy, Banshee's cousin, is a little pissed at his cuz for stealing away Siryn, who just happens to be Banshee's daughter. (For you memory-impaired fans, Cassidy used to have Siryn help him commit crimes.) So how does he plan to get revenge? By stealing the kids from Generation X, that's how. Sounds like Tom's had just a wee bit too much whiskey of late. By Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo. **$1.95**

HOT PICK!

SPIDER-MAN: HOBGOBLIN LIVES! #1 (OF 3)

MARVEL Hey, somebody at Marvel finally yanked their head out of their ass and got Roger Stern (read: the best Spider-Man writer EVER!) to write Spider-Man again! Woo-hoooooooo! Anyways, Petey's back in the Spider suit, wall crawlin' and web slingin' like nobody's business! But when the current Hobgoblin is brought to trial, something's just not right. Weird things start to happen as a stranger emerges from the turmoil right into Spidey's life. By Roger Stern, Ron Frenz and George Pérez. That swell guy Stern says, "The story gets into the heads of Peter Parker, Betty Leeds and a number of people whose lives have been touched and affected by the Hobgoblin in his first incarnation. It's in this issue where Peter Parker finally realizes that Ned [Leeds] couldn't have been the Hobgoblin. He realizes that not only was Ned *not* the Hobgoblin, but Ned was set up presumably by the real Hobgoblin—who must still be out there someplace. Peter realizes he has no idea who that might be." **$2.50**

GREEN LANTERN #82

DC COMICS Kyle just got back in good with Donna, so it only makes sense that he starts screwin' up. Instead of meeting Donna's brat, he hangs out with some former GLs trading stories about Hal Jordan, then he's gotta catch a bunch of tigers set loose from the zoo, and then answer a JLA emergency signal. Hmmm...somethin' tells me Kyle's not gonna be gettin' any. By Ron Marz, Tom Grindberg and Romeo Tanghal. **$1.75**

JLA #1

POWER OF SHAZAM! #22

HEPCATS #0

ANTARCTIC PRESS This all-new issue (in color!) shows our pal Joey kind of upset over the break-up with his girlfriend. He could probably live with that on a normal day, but his friend Arnie's got a hot babe hangin' from his arm, makin' Joe eat himself alive with envy. By Martin Wagner. And, hey, check out our funky *Hepcats* feature elsewhere in this very issue! **$2.95**

HITMAN #10

DC COMICS No one seems to like metahumans these days. Hitman's got a government-run S.W.A.T. team on his trail—and if they catch him they're gonna drag his sorry ass down to the town square and execute him publicly! But wait, here comes the cavalry in the form of...Green Lantern?!? I thought Garth Ennis hated GL? Maybe he was plastered when he wrote the script. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**

IMPULSE #21

DC COMICS Some kids bring home stray animals, dirty clothes or a bunch of rocks. What does Impulse bring home? The entire friggin' Legion of Super-Heroes! After being stranded in our time, the teen superheroes hook up with Impulse and Max Mercury, hoping the speedsters'll somehow know of a way back home to the 30th century. Max better keep an eye on these kids, or before he knows it he'll be up to his ears in Pearl Jam and the Macarena. By Mark Waid, Craig Rousseau and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

JLA #1

DC COMICS Hey, we here at *Wizard* read the first three issues of this series and can safely say one thing: The new JLA kicks giant ass! Awesome storylines, dead-on characterization and top-notch art on a team book starring Supes, Bats, Lantern, Flash, Aquaman, Wonder Woman and Martian Manhunter! If you don't buy this book, you suck. This ish: The JLA has to figure out

exactly what an alien race called the Hyperclan wants with Earth. They *say* they've come to help the planet, but when they start executing criminals, the JLA starts getting a teensy bit concerned. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. Morrison says, "An alien superteam comes to Earth with pretty much the same powers as the best of the Justice League. They arrive on Earth and say their planet was destroyed by greed and profiteering and pollution, and they've come to make sure it doesn't happen here. And these guys are fabulous. Of course they've got a hidden agenda. It sets up that scenario and also calls into question why the Justice League *should* exist." **$1.95**

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #3

IMAGE John Raven's been taken prisoner by that nasty Sonny Abbot, but Raven's the only one who can stop the war in Devil's Echo. So it's up to Chance and St. George (her li'l dragon) to rescue Raven, stop the war and head to Toys R Us to find those infamous Shadows of the Empire figures! Woo-hoo! By James Robinson and Paul Smith. **$2.50**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #88

DC COMICS After hangin' out with the Legion for a while, Impulse decides he wants to join the team (poor, poor Legion). So, while they're trying to figure out a way to get home, they also gotta keep an eye on Impulse and make sure he doesn't start invitin' Stone Boy and Matter-Eater Lad over for dinner. Plus, there's gonna be a rough romantic ride ahead for a couple of the Legionnaires. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Ron Boyd. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #44

DC COMICS Things seem to be settling down a bit after the havoc of the Legion try-outs, but, as usual, things never stay settled for long. Seems that some of the losers who didn't make the cut are pissed at the ones who did. So what do they do? They use their power to attack the Legion! (Yeah, that'll really help them get in at next year's try-outs!) But they'll soon discover why they didn't make the cut, after the Legion beats the livin' crap out of 'em. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

POWER OF SHAZAM! #22

DC COMICS After following a trail of death that might be linked to "Muscles" McGinnis' secret files, Batman ends up in Fawcett City. While there, he hooks up with Captain Marvel (and you know Batman just loves teaming-up with other heroes...), as the duo's attacked by the creature called Sin. By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause and Mike Manley. **$1.75**

PREACHER #21

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #46

WHAT I'M READING

NAME: **Dan Jurgens**

OCCUPATION: **Writer of *Teen Titans***

CURRENTLY READS: "My favorite one of all is probably *Sandman Mystery Theatre*. It does a nice job of conveying the atmosphere of the time and it has the best-written slowly developing relationship between a principal male and female character that I've seen in a long, long time. *Berlin* is a nice little black-and-white that captures the time and atmosphere and era of which it takes place—pre-WWII Germany. *Terminal City* creates a very uniquely designed, graphically well-drawn city which I think also blends in with it's fun mystery and the theme that surrounds it.

Photo by Al Ortega

PREACHER #21

VERTIGO/DC "Crusaders," Part 3 (of 6). Lots o' stuff in this ish. First, the Saint of Killers makes his way across the ocean, still on Jesse's trail. Then, Starr is visited by a very special little boy and Allfather D'Aronique, the head of the Grail. Finally, Jesse looks to be ready to blow it again with Tulip. (All that and NO Green Lantern appearance!) By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #46

VERTIGO/DC "The Blackhawk," Part 2 (of 4). Polish pilot Jahnoas Prohaska (a.k.a. the Blackhawk), is arrested for the murder of a coed and could be in a lot o' hot water if he can't prove his innocence. Luckily, the Sandman's on the case, out to set things right. He's gotta find the real killer, but he's also gotta keep Blackhawk's mission in America a secret. (Remember, Sandy, "The slip of a lip sinks ships.") By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Matt Smith. **MR $2.50**

SCUD THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN #14

FIREMAN PRESS It's Scud, Oswald and Drywall vs. Voodoo Ben Franklin and the invincible Jeff. (Jeff's a girl, by the way). Also, Sussudio and Scud Lite have to battle their way past a horde of zombie dinosaurs on their way to help out Scud. Sound more like an evil Muppet movie than a comic? Maybe, but take our word for it, *Scud*'s a hoot of a read and highly-recommended. Go buy lots. By Dan Harmon and Rob Schrab. **$2.95**

PICKS

STRANGERS IN PARADISE (VOL. 3) #3

HOMAGE Things just aren't going good for Francine. She's finally started her daily regimen of exercising at a health club before going to work. Unfortunately, things don't quite turn out like she expected. And, on her first day at the new job, Francine finds out her boss is living with her ex-boyfriend Chuck! Plus, see the fight Katchoo and David get in when he complains about the long painting sessions. (Hey, *you* try standing perfectly still for a few hours while you're buck nekkid!) By Terry Moore, who says, "Ya know where I got the idea for that story? I went to the gym one morning and I'd finished working out and I was changing. So I'm standing there in my underwear and I turn around and there's a woman who walked right in. She stared at me for five long seconds, then she realized she was in the wrong place and got real embarrassed and giggled "Oh, sorry" and she left. And I thought, 'What a Francine thing to do.' That's kind of the tone of how I want it to go." **$2.75**

SUPERMAN: THE WEDDING ALBUM

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #17

SUPERMAN: THE WEDDING ALBUM

DC COMICS Here it is, boys and girls, the moment the entire world has waited for—the wedding of Lois Lane and Clark Kent! (Pssst...he's really Superman.) Be there for the good, the bad and hopefully, the honeymoon (mmmmm...Lois). By Tom Grummett, Dan Jurgens, Karl Kesel, Roger Stern, John Byrne, Jerry Ordway, George Pérez and a ton of Superman artists and writers from the past and present. Simonson says, "I think it will be pretty darn cool. It's mostly an issue that focuses on the personal aspects...you know the family interaction, that kind of thing. There is some superhero stuff involved also, but mostly it focus on the personal, like the 'Lois & Clark' show tries to focus on the personal interaction between the two. I think it should be fun. I'm hoping that people will enjoy it." **$4.95**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #17

MARVEL One of the two good Marvel titles in the market today (*Daredevil*'s the other one). And it's cheap too! In this ish, Peter tries to fix things with Betty Brant. Then, Spidey has to deal with Hawkeye (prior to his Avenger days), who's doing bad things with his arrows. (Well, that explains why they smell so funny). By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Vey. **99 CENTS** W

AT A GLANCE

A LISTING OF THE HIGH-PROFILE BOOKS SHIPPING IN NOVEMBER

Avengers #3 (Marvel)
Nick Fury's gotta save the Avengers from Kang. Also see what Loki, the Enchantress, Mantis and Ultron are planning. **$1.95**

Captain America #3 (Marvel)
See Nick Fury (again), Cap, Falcon and Bucky against the Red Skull and Master Man in a battle royal. **$1.95**

Curse of the Spawn #3 (Image)
Daniel Llanso, the new Spawn, has to find a way to save his sister and nephew from the unleashed fury of Hell. **$1.95**

DV8 #3 (Image)
Eva and Frostbite get their eyes opened to what city life's really like when they go for a late-night walk in NYC. **$2.50**

Fantastic Four #3 (Marvel)
Okay. Nick Fury had to save Cap and the Avengers, now they have to save the Fantastic Four from Namor and his underwater cronies. **$1.95**

Gen13 #15 (Image)
The kids experience college life and even a frat rumble or two. **$2.50**

Gen13 Bootleg #1 (Image)
The kids are thrown into the Lindquist Fault—a portal to alternate realities where all their dreams come true. **$2.50**

Iron Man #3 (Marvel)
After being saved by Cap and the Avengers, the FF run off to check on Tony Stark and end up getting in a fight with Iron Man! **$1.95**

Shi #12 (Crusade)
Shi clashes with Masahiro Arashi for the last time, as all the series' loose threads are tied up. **$2.95**

Spawn #56 (Image)
As Cy-Gor runs rampant in NYC, Spawn continues to hunt down Jason Wynn. **$1.95**

Spawn the Impaler #2 (Image)
Vlad the Impaler rises from the dead to cause a hurtin' on the world's mortals. **$2.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Spider-Man #76 sees a new crime-fighter in town all set to help Spidey. **($1.95)** In *Spectacular Spider-Man #242*, Spidey takes on the Chameleon! **($1.50)** In *Sensational Spider-Man #12*, The Trapster's back and he's seriously out to conquer NYC!. **($1.95)** *Amazing Spider-Man #419* features the Black Tarantula! Spidey's gotta squish this new villain before the Tarantula's head gets too big. **($1.50)** *Spider-Man/Gen^{13}* sees Spidey wake up in the Gen^{13} kids' backyard, not knowing how he got there. **($4.95)**

Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—The Golden Age of the Sith #2 (Dark Horse)
The Dark Lord of the Sith is dead and two hyperspace explorers get caught between two factions who want to replace the Dark Lord. **$2.95**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
In *Superman #119*, Brainiac 5 could be the only one to help Supes get his powers back, since the sun went out in "The Final Night." **($1.95)** *Superman: The Man of Steel #63* sees a powerless Clark kidnapped and given truth serum that makes him reveal he's Superman! **($1.95)** *Superman: The Man of Steel #64* sees Supes fly into the sun itself! Will his powers be restored or will he become Super Crispy Man? **($1.95)** In *Action Comics #728*, Superman's back in action as he's gotta stop Suicide Slum from burning down. **($1.95)** *Action Comics #729* sees Supes return to his Fortress of Solitude for a little rest, but he finds a weird alien instead. **($1.95)** In *Adventures of Superman #541-#542*, Supes take Lois to Hawaii for their honeymoon, where they run into Superboy and a bad guy called Kekona. **($1.95)**

Uncanny X-Men #340 (Marvel)
When Iceman infiltrates the Graydon Creed campaign network, his cover could be blown when his dad shows up! **$1.95**

Witchblade #11 (Top Cow)
Sara Pezzini wants to investigate the supernatural Microwave murders, but the Witchblade doesn't want to get involved. That could be a problem... **$2.50**

Wolverine #109 (Marvel)
Wolvie and Yukio team up and take on a bunch of ninjas and the Hand itself. **$1.95**

X-Men #60 (Marvel)
It's Storm vs. Candra, that mean ol' External. It's gonna be a doozie of a fight. **$1.95** ●

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TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

TALKING ABOUT GEN[13]

By Rob Allstetter

The straight-to-video **"Gen[13]"** animated movie remains on course for release next summer. The latest news on the project is the announcement of the voice cast.

The cast includes **Flea** from the Red Hot Chili Peppers as Grunge, Alicia Witt ("Mr. Holland's Opus") as Caitlin, E.G. Daily ("Pee Wee's Big Adventure") as Freefall, John de Lancie (Q from "Star Trek: The Next Generation") as Lynch, **Mark Hamill** ("Star Wars") as Threshold, Lauren Lane ("The Nanny") as Ivana and **Cloris Leachman** ("Phyllis") as Helga.

Jack Fletcher, the voice director on the "Spawn" animated series for HBO, is also directing the voices for "Gen[13]," which is the first film from WildStorm Pictures.

"Gen[13]" writer/producer/director Kevin Altieri said plans remain for the movie to be sold in two versions, a PG-13 and a likely G. "There is violence and there is partial nudity," said Altieri. "We have a shower scene with Caitlin and Roxy—it's a character-building moment."

Altieri added there could be a "Gen[13]" television series to follow the movie.

FLEA AND MARK HAMILL ARE AMONG THE CAST THAT'S SET TO VOICE THE UPCOMING "GEN[13]" STRAIGHT-TO-VIDEO MOVIE

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE

Marvel's Avi Arad said that the **"Blade"** live-action movie, starring **Wesley Snipes**, is in pre-production from New Line Cinema. Arad had just come from a dinner with the producers, director Steve Norrington and writer David Goyer.

"It will be rolling at the end of January," Arad said. "It's got a magical script and should be a fantastic movie. Steve Norrington is a cool British director. He did 'Death Machine,' which is kind of a cult, high-energy, visually fantastic film."

Arad mentioned that a second draft of a Goyer script for "Venom"—also from New Line—is being worked on.

Mike France, who wrote "Cliffhanger" and "Goldeneye," has completed a script for a **"Fantastic Four"** film from 20th Century Fox. "It's a great piece of writing; the most brilliant work he's ever done," Arad said.

Australian director Jeffrey Wright ("Romper Stomper") has been attached to the **"Silver Surfer"** live-action film, also from 20th Century Fox. An animated "Silver Surfer" series is in early stages of development and could be on the Fox Network next fall. *Wizard* recently learned that a live-action **"Captain America"** film is also in development.

Also on the animation front, **"The Incredible Hulk"** is off to a strong ratings start on Sunday mornings for the United Paramount Network. The series' premiere was up 36 percent over the ratings last May in its time period, and, by the second episode, "The Incredible Hulk" was UPN's top-rated Sunday morning series.

An upcoming episode of "The Incredible Hulk" called "Mortal Bounds" will guest-star **Thor**. Written by Bruce Reid Schaefer, the episode, set in Detroit, features the Gargoyle trying to fix his disfigurement, and a gamma virus. "It's a fast-paced, 'ER'-type of show," said story editor Greg Johnson.

WB'S "SUPERMAN" GOT OFF TO A SLOW RATINGS START IN SEPTEMBER

SUPERMAN SOARING

Look! On Saturday morning TV. On Sunday night TV. Soon to be back in movie theaters. It's **Superman**!

DC's oldest character is experiencing a multimedia renaissance, which will be topped off with a new live-action movie tentatively scheduled to begin production next summer. Jon Peters, who helped launch the Batman movie franchise, is producing.

Daily Variety and *Entertainment Weekly* report that director/writer **Kevin Smith** is rewriting the script for the "Superman" movie. Gregory Poirer did the original script, which incorporates many elements of the "Death of Superman" comic book storyline from 1992.

Smith is a huge comics fan. His film credits include "Clerks," "Mallrats," and "Chasing Amy"—each riddled with comic book references. Reportedly, he will be including cameos from other DC heroes in the film. It is very unlikely that Dean Cain, star of ABC's **"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman,"** will be involved in the film.

The fourth season premiere of "Lois & Clark," picking up from last season's New Krypton cliffhanger, placed 64th out of 123 shows in the Nielsen ratings for the week of Sept. 16-22. That was down from the 40th place overall ranking that "Lois & Clark" posted last season, although October's wedding episode was expected to do better in the ratings.

Future episodes of "Lois & Clark" will guest-star Jack Larson, the original Jimmy Olsen from the 1950s "Superman" television series; Jasmine Guy from "A Different World;" and Drew Carey and Kathy Kinney from "The Drew Carey Show."

The new "Superman" animated series is drawing rave reviews, although the 90-minute prime-time movie, "Superman: The Last Son Krypton," placed 100th out of 101 shows in the Nielsen ratings for the week of Sept. 2-8.

"Fun and Games," a Toyman episode, is scheduled for Oct. 26 and closes out a month of reruns. Kids' WB tentatively has all-new episodes scheduled for November.

LIEFELD PROJECTS STILL A GO

No longer part of Image Comics, **Rob Liefeld** is moving forward with his television and movie projects, as well as his comics.

In an interview that took place shortly after he broke from Image, Liefeld told *Wizard* his departure from the company will have no impact with his television and movie dealings, and he plans to make several announcements in upcoming months about new projects.

"Enough people have told me it doesn't matter," Liefeld said. "Hollywood doesn't understand what Image is. I've never sold anything on the basis it was an Image property."

Liefeld's latest license is **Badrock** to New Line Cinema for a live-action film. The project was originally being shopped in animation form, but Liefeld said New Line was "very aggressive" to put Badrock into live-action.

"Badrock is a really cool, fun romp. I hesitate to call it a kids' movie because I think it will appeal to everyone," Liefeld said. "I would compare it more to 'The Mask.' That's what they liked about it. It's a teenage kid who suddenly becomes—quite by accident—this powerful monolith. The twist to the story is that it's the best thing that's ever happened to him. He gets beat up by a bully every day, all of the girls in school ignore him, he's got one friend in the whole, wide world, and he's a nerdy guy who really doesn't fit in. Then one day he becomes this creature and he's like, 'Cool!' "

Liefeld's other live-action movie projects include **"Prophet"** at TriStar Pictures, **"Avengelyne"** for New Line, and **"The Mark"** for **Tom Cruise**'s production company and Paramount Pictures.

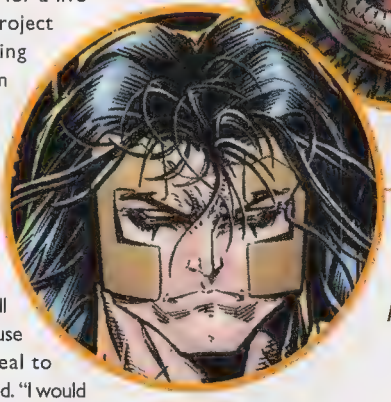
Cy Vorus and Ethan Reiff are currently rewriting their first draft of "Prophet."

"When I first read it, I went, 'Oh my God, this is a big movie. This is an expensive movie,' " Liefeld said. "But TriStar hasn't balked, really. When they first made the deal, they were very honest in saying this is the only comic book franchise they want to develop."

The first draft of "Avengelyne" is expected to be turned in soon by screenwriter Lem Dobbs. "We had a really good meeting with him," Liefeld said. "We met with a number of guys, and he had the best take on the material."

Liefeld—who is still publishing his comic titles under Maximum Press—told *Wizard* he realizes movie-making isn't an overnight process, but does hope to have the "Prophet", "Avengelyne" and "The Mark" films in theaters soon.

"All of these movies I expect to be shooting or to have finished shooting by this time next year," Liefeld said. "That's what I am being told."

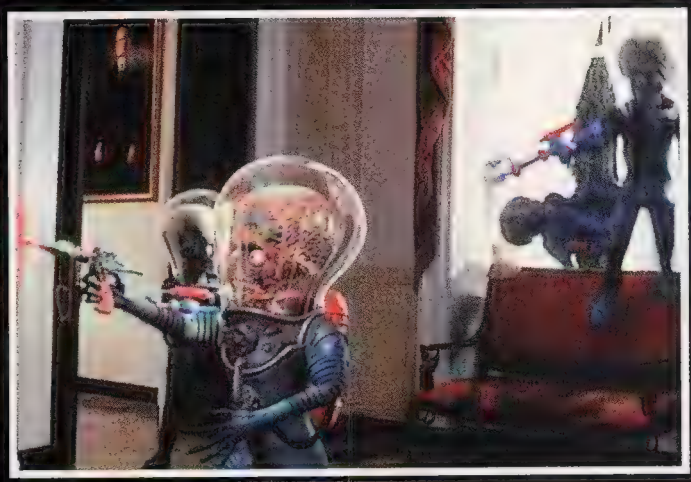


THERE'S NO "IMAGE" PROBLEM—PROPHET (BOTTOM) AND BADROCK ARE AMONG THE ROB LIEFELD CHARACTERS ON THEIR WAY TO THE BIG SCREEN

WIZARD SNEAK PEEK:

"MARS ATTACKS!"

•PREVIEW•



Here's a special look at Tim Burton's **"Mars Attacks!"** movie, due for release on Dec. 13. The Warner Bros. production stars Jack Nicholson, Christina Applegate, Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close, Danny DeVito, Martin Short and Michael J. Fox.

GLOVER MAD FOR BATMAN AND ROBIN

"Batman and Robin," the fourth movie in the live-action series, began production Sept. 12 in Los Angeles. Latest casting news has John Glover as Dr. Jason Woodrue, a mad scientist. (No word on whether or not Woodrue will eventually become **The Floronic Man**.) Glover is a Tony Award-winning actor from "Love! Valour! Compassion!" who also appeared as the Donald Trump-liker CEO of "Gremlins 2: The New Batch."

Meanwhile, DC Comics editor **Dennis O'Neil** told *Wizard* he will be writing the comics adaptation of "Batman and Robin." O'Neil met with "Batman and Robin" director **Joel Schumacher** and writer Akiva Goldsman earlier this year.

MALIBU LIVES ON

Malibu Comics, which is now unofficially "Marvel West Coast" and hasn't made much noise in print form lately, continues to expand on the television/movie front.

Veteran television producer Glen Larson has teamed with Tribune Entertainment Company, TF1 International and Village Roadshow Pictures to develop a live-action TV series based on Malibu's hero **The Night Man**.

Larson has developed, created, written and/or produced such television series as **"Battlestar Galactica,"** "Quincy," "Magnum, P.I.," "The Six Million Dollar Man," "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century," "Knight Rider" and "The Fall Guy." He called *The Night Man* "a cutting-edge comic book that belongs on television."

Details on the series were sketchy at press time, but sources said the TV Night Man will be Johnny Domino, a music teacher at day and a "sultry saxophone player" at night. There are 22 one-hour episodes planned.

Malibu also has **"Men in Black,"** a feature film from Columbia Pictures starring Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, set to hit theaters next year. A **Prime** live-action movie is in development at Universal Pictures, and reruns of the only season of the animated **"UltraForce"** are airing Sunday mornings on the USA Network.

CROW FLIES, THEN FALLS

"The Crow: City of Angels" set a box-office record for Labor Day weekend. Appearing in 2,423 theaters nationally, the

DETECTIVES AND AN ACTRESS USE SPECIAL EFFECTS TO STOP CRIMINALS IN "FX: THE SERIES"

Mirimax/Dimension release took in $9.8 million and placed first at the box office.

However, the film received generally negative reviews—*Daily Variety* called it a "stunningly awful sequel"—and then it dropped all the way to seventh place in its second week with $2.1 million.

"The Crow" opened in May of 1994 with $11.8 million and went on to take in $50.7 million.

"FX" COMES TO TV

Fans of special effects might want to catch the new syndicated **"FX"** TV series, which adapts the hit 1986 and 1991 feature films about a movie effects artist and detective who use effects to foil criminals. At the show's recent opening party in New York's Planet Hollywood, actor Kevin Dobson, who plays Detective Leo McCarthy, noted one of the show's interesting features: "At the beginning of the show, we see a movie being made—and you wonder, how is that going to affect the crime of the week?"

Producer Stephen Downing (who produced "MacGyver" and "RoboCop: The Series") told *Wizard* the show will lean more towards action-adventure than drama, with as much special effects as possible. "We're able to get a lot on the screen, but you have a feature [film story] with a television budget." He added that he may use the RoboCop suit in one of the films the effects expert, Rollie Tyler, works on. Future shows include a virtual reality airplane adventure, a martial arts episode and a bloody hijack massacre.

THE TICK—THE MOVIE!

"The Tick" will be hitting the big screen. Fox Family Films has signed a deal to release a theatrical animated film based on the animated series, which currently airs on Saturday mornings on the Fox Network and on Sunday nights on Comedy Central.

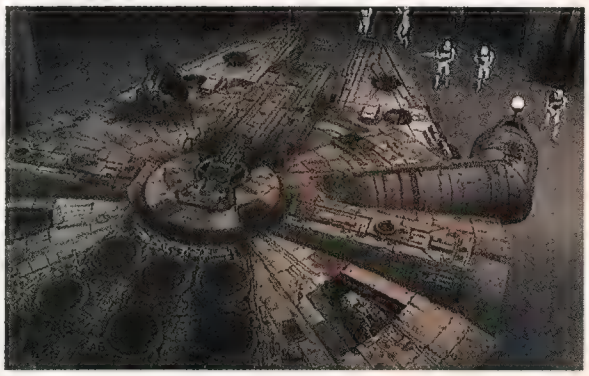
Ben Edlund, creator of the character, and writing partner Richard Liebmann-Smith are working on the script. No director has been named yet.

SHORT TAKES

Lucasfilm has bumped up the re-release of **"Star Wars"** from February 14 to January 31. **"Empire Strikes Back"** will be released February 21 and **"Return of the Jedi"** on March 7. Also, according to *Hollywood Reporter*, **George Lucas** is set to produce and direct the first Star Wars "prequel," which will begin production in fall 1997 at Leavesden Studios with a $70 million budget, and is slated to be released in 1999....**Scott Lobdell**, writer of ***X-Men***, *Uncanny X-Men*, *Generation X* and the new *Iron Man* series, has signed on with the William Morris Agency and will likely be getting into television and movie work....In addition to **Kevin Sorbo** as Kull and **Tia Carrere** as an evil sorceress, the cast of 1997's "Kull the Conqueror" includes Thomas Ian Griffith, Karian Lombard, Harvey Fierstein, Edward Tudor-Pole and Roy Brocksmith. Among the film's locations was an authentic castle near the border of Poland....Theresa Randle ("Girl 6") has been officially cast as Wanda Blake in the live-action **"Spawn"** movie....Upcoming topics to be addressed on episodes of the Sci-Fi Channel's **"Anti-Gravity Room"** include "Monsters & Evil" and "Fantasy."...The season premiere of **"The Simpsons"** will be Nov. 3 on Fox....**"Independence Day,"** the movie which took in nearly $280 million at the box office this summer, will be released on home video on Nov. 22....**"Barb Wire,"** a bomb last May with less than $5 million at the box office, isn't faring well in home video, either. The film, based on the Dark Horse character and starring **Pamela Lee**, failed to place in the top 20 in its first week of release...."Space Cases," the Nickelodeon series created by **Peter David** and **Bill Mumy**, received a nomination for a Cable Ace award in the children's 7-and-over category....The season premiere of **"Star Trek: Voyager"**—featuring the appearance of *Enterprise* Captain Sulu and Janice Rand—helped UPN to some of its best ratings ever. The episode placed 56th in the ratings for the week of Sept. 2-8....Director **John Carpenter** has been linked to "Mutant Chronicles," a movie from Pressman Films based on the fantasy game. Philip Eisner and David Goyer have written the script....In September, **"Pinky & The Brain"** won an Emmy Award for outstanding animated series, while **"The X-Files"** took best writing for a drama series (for the episode "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose")....NBC's **"Saturday Night Live,"** now in its 22nd season, has added animated shorts. They will be written and produced by Robert Smigel, who wrote for "SNL" from 1985-93, and will include "Ambiguously Gay Duo," which first appeared on the short-lived "The Dana Carvey Show."...Leslie Mann ("The Cable Guy") has joined Brendan Fraser in the cast of **"George of the Jungle,"** a live-action film based on the old cartoon series.

Rob Allstetter wouldn't mind joining Caitlin and Roxy in their "character-building moment."

NOW SET FOR JANUARY RELEASE, THE "STAR WARS" RE-RELEASE CONTAINS THIS REVISED SCENE



"FX" photo courtesy of Rysher Entertainment

TRAILER PARK SPECIAL REPORT:

"X-MEN": THE FINAL SHOWS

BY ROB ALLSTETTER

The X-Men are getting a television makeover.

The Fox Network's **"X-Men"** animated series is ending its run at 76 episodes, with the last six episodes tentatively scheduled to air during the May sweeps. Those final episodes will include a World War II story teaming Captain America and Wolverine, the return of Apocalypse, the origin of Mr. Sinister, the TV introduction of Cannonball and, in the grand finale, an emotional story with Professor Xavier lying on his deathbed.

But perhaps even more interesting is the fact that those episodes, now being produced directly at Saban Entertainment after Graz Entertainment closed up shop, will have a different look to them: new character designs, backgrounds and color schemes.

"We're pushing it to the limit to get it to where we want it," said new producer Tom McLaughlin, an animation veteran whose recent credits include "Batman," "Fantastic Four" and "Superman." "We want to see something different and something cool."

Don't expect Wolverine to start wearing green or anything that radical. In some ways, it's like a new artist has been brought in. Think of the show as looking less like Jim Lee's X-Men and more like Joe Madureira's.

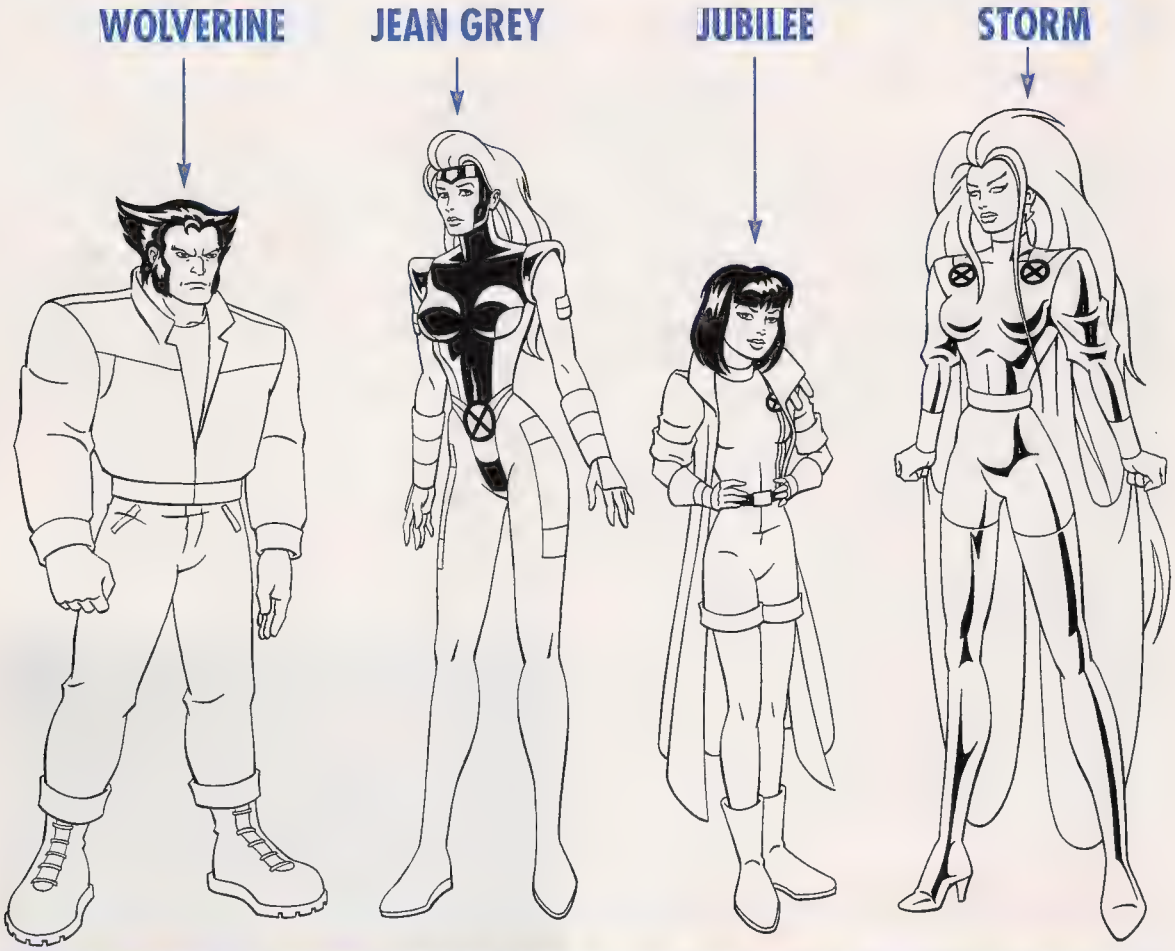
"We've simplified certain things," said McLaughlin. "We've made things a little more graphic and easy to read."

"It's really freshening up the look," said Dan Veesenmeyer, a storyboard artist who has worked on numerous episodes.

Jubilee has the biggest makeover. She's thinner and taller, more along the lines of her current appearance in the *Generation X* series. Like the other female X-Men, she also sports a new hairstyle. Most of the hairstyles aren't quite as big as before, and they tend to flow straight down.

Cyclops' costume is now blue on the outside and black on the inside, similar to what McLaughlin did to the uniforms on the second season of "Fantastic Four." Wolverine is more stocky, with bigger feet.

McLaughlin is also excited about the types of stories in the final six shows.



HERE'S A SNEAK PEEK AT THE X-CHARACTERS' NEW LOOKS (ABOVE) AND STORYBOARDS FOR THE LAST EPISODES (NEXT PAGE)

"We have three time pieces, and we tried to do the backgrounds to set up a little more atmosphere," he said. "These stories are not about 8,000 characters trying to blow each other's heads off. If you watch 'Batman' and 'Superman,' there's pacing, which I think we have here."

Here's a rundown of the final six shows, in likely order of broadcast:

"Fifth Horseman": With the aid of Fabian Cortez, Apocalypse escapes from the astral plane he was left on after last season's four-parter. The episode focuses on Jubilee and the Beast, and includes the Hounds. "The Beast gets turned into even more of a monster," said McLaughlin.

"Jubilee's Fairy Tale": Trapped with some children, Jubilee tries to calm them down by telling them a fairy tale, with X-Men characters filling in the mythical roles. "It's like looking at Walt Disney stuff," said McLaughlin.

"Old Soldiers": Captain America and a pre-claws Logan try to rescue a scientist from the Red Skull in a World War II story that also features an appearance by Sgt. Fury and his Howlin' Commandos.

"This was the most fun episode I've worked on in a long time," said Veesenmeyer, who storyboarded the last half. "It came out looking the best, and that's probably because everybody was so jazzed about it."

"Descent": Incorporating many of the elements of the recent *Cyclops and Phoenix* comic book mini-series, this episode reveals the origin of Mr. Sinister.

"Hidden Agendas": A manipulative army officer tries to recruit Sam Guthrie into the military ranks after his Cannonball powers blossom. "It's about a town turning on one of its own," said McLaughlin.

"Graduation Day": An attack by Gyrich leaves Professor Xavier dying and Magneto contemplates a mutant takeover in an episode that brings in many of the series' characters—including Morph and Lilandra—and that ends in a way you might not expect.

"It will be a teary goodbye," McLaughlin promised.

"It's really, really special," added Veesenmeyer. "If there's one cel to get for the entire series, it would be from the final scene."

These will definitely be the last episodes of the series, but sources have told *Wizard* the "X-Men" franchise won't be disappearing from the animation scene. No deals have been struck yet, but possibilities include a totally retooled "X-Men" show featuring some different characters, an X-Men spinoff like "X-Force" or a show spotlighting X-Men characters like Wolverine, Gambit or Cable in solo adventures.

McLaughlin would be all for doing new X-Men adventures. "I had a ball doing the last six," he said. "I wish I could have done more."

scene

A guide to Japanese comics and animation

by Carl Gustav Horn

save our sailors

Can Sailor Moon (above) weather the storm of cancelation?

Quick—what's one word to describe "Sailor Moon"? Try "canceled."

Despite its cult-favorite popularity, the anime TV show "Sailor Moon" is being canceled in the United States, with no clear picture of when it might return to the airwaves.

It's certainly unfortunate. "Sailor Moon" began on American television in the fall of 1995, after having already aired on TV in Japan for four years. An offbeat cartoon series, "Sailor Moon" follows the story of a somewhat ditzy 14-year-old girl (the title character) and her school friends who are granted magical artifacts and struggle to tip the balance in a cosmic battle between good and evil. The show was known beforehand to American fans who enjoy imported anime through fan clubs or local Japanese video stores.

Curiously, guys admitting an appreciation of "Sailor Moon" often got strange looks, despite the fact that the show has been praised for its attractive characters, dramatic story development, stylish action and humor. The problem was that "Sailor Moon" is a show meant for *girls*. And unfortunately, both female anime fans and female-oriented anime have remained a minority, albeit a growing one, in the U.S.

Even as it comes to an end, at least for now, the broadcast of "Sailor Moon" has therefore been a very important development in the history of anime in America. It has helped to expand the demographic of the fan base and demonstrate the diversity of a medium which is sometimes characterized in the American media as being a shock-fest of sex and violence. The last such mass-media development was "Robotech," which aired on American TV in the mid-1980s and was the first anime show with strong female characters with added elements of soap opera drama. (Previous shows like "Star Blazers" and "Battle of the Planets" had only one major female character each.) Ironically, "Robotech" too was canceled to the chagrin of a large fan base, just as viewers of "Sailor Moon" in America are now discovering. (The show has been renewed in Canada and also currently airs in Australia and New Zealand.)

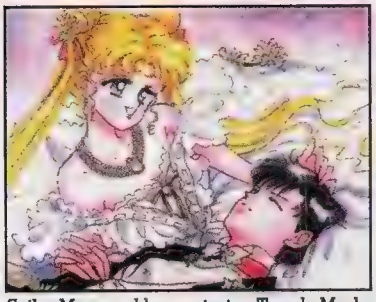
DIC Entertainment, the producer of the English version of "Sailor Moon," cites U.S. ratings as "disappointing," leading to what they are calling a "production hiatus" on new episodes.

Although ratings were in fact also characterized by DIC as "decent" at one point during the show's run, with fairly good sales of the "Sailor Moon" merchandise, the core issue was its time slot. "Sailor Moon" has aired at non-competitive, early-morning hours in many parts of the U.S.—this was also the fate of "Robotech" 10 years ago. Negotiations with local stations to get better time slots were not successful. Although it should be noted that prime hours in the afternoon are often occupied by the animated programming of well-established American companies such as Disney and Warner, shutting out fledgling companies like DIC.

A plan to continue broadcasting "Sailor Moon" on the Turner network fell through because of similar limited choices in schedule, leaving DIC to "continue to explore other ways for the show to return to the air."

To date, only a few of the episodes which aired on American television have been released on VHS home video by DIC in conjunction with Buena Vista Home Video. And as of this writing, plans to release more are not finalized. But avid fans don't have to go cold turkey on "Sailor Moon." One good way to get your fix is to discover the world of the original manga upon which the show is based. *Sailor Moon*'s creator is Naoko Takeuchi, a young, glamorous writer/artist, who is seen as a sort of female rock star—a status not unknown in Japan's comics-mad society.

As is also often the case, Takeuchi had no formal art training, and oddly enough, the decision by the venerable studio Toei to make an anime TV series of her work was based on a one-shot story she did for a special edition of the girls' bimonthly *Nakayoshi* entitled "Codename Is Sailor V." With TV production planned, Takeuchi started *Sailor Moon* as a regular feature in the magazine in 1991. Both the



Sailor Moon and her protector, Tuxedo Mask

manga and the anime series have been in production ever since. The manga stories have served as jumping-off points for various story arcs in the anime, with the show's staff writing new material in many cases.

Since 1991, there have been five "Sailor Moon" anime series: the original "Sailor Moon," "Sailor Moon R," "Sailor Moon S," "Sailor Moon Super S" and the new "Sailor Moon Stars." The 65 episodes that aired as "Sailor Moon" in North America, as prepared by DIC, were actually a combination of episodes from the original Japanese "Sailor Moon" and "Sailor Moon R." Many fans feel the construction was sometimes done in a rather cavalier fashion—episodes were chosen on the basis of whether it was felt they could be successfully adapted for a North American audience. In one case, a single episode was made by editing together parts of two separate episodes. And just like "Robotech" in the mid-'80s, names of characters were changed, relationships altered, and material considered objectionable for young viewers here was altered for American TV. For example, the gay relationship between the "Sailor Moon" villains Zoisite and Malachite—standard fare in Japanese girls' comics—was neatly "solved" in the English version by making Zoisite into a woman!

Although there are no known plans at present for any American company to produce an English version of Takeuchi's *Sailor Moon* manga, its many collected volumes and the monthly *Nakayoshi*, which continues to publish "Sailor Moon" adventures, can be readily ordered from one of the seven American branches of the international Japanese bookstore chain, Kinokuniya: New York, NY (212-765-1461), Edgewater, NJ (212-941-7580), Seattle, WA (206-587-2477), San Francisco, CA (415-567-7625), San Jose, CA (408-252-1300), Los Angeles, CA (213-687-4480) and Costa Mesa, CA (714-434-9986). Exchange rates vary from West and East Coast stores, but you may expect to pay about $5-$6 for either individual collected manga volumes, or issues of *Nakayoshi*.

Carl Horn has also been altered from the original anime version. He's now known simply as "Sailor," a stand-in for the Village People. Watch him boogie!

picks of the month

manga

Manga Vizion

(Viz Comics, $4.95, monthly, b&w, 80 pgs.)

As some fans know, Japanese comics come in thicker sizes that make what we call comic books look more like pamphlets. While no American manga periodical yet comes close to the originals in size (let alone attempting to match their weekly schedule!) *Manga Vizion* gives you an idea of what you're missing. Approaching its third year of publication, *Manga Vizion* takes the standard Japanese magazine anthology format by printing three stories a month—some ongoing, others one-shots. Making their first English appearance are stories from such artists as Rumiko Takahashi, Ryoichi Ikegami, Kei Kusunoki, Keiko Nishi, and Moto Haigo. These all-new tales run the gamut from slapstick comedy and relationship stories to adventure and graphic horror. A bonus column, "Manga in Focus," addresses various topics in manga. Taken all together, *Manga Vizion* gives you the most diversity in Japanese comics to be found in any magazine in America.

anime

Gunbuster

(Manga Entertainment, subtitled, 3 vols., 60 mins. ea., $19.95, now available)

One of the all-time best-selling anime OAV series in Japan, "Gunbuster" is set in an alternate near-future dominated by a new Japanese empire and an intact Soviet Union. It's the story of a cadet at the Okinawa Space High School for Girls who is eventually chosen to pilot the ultimate weapon in an apocalyptic war against aliens. No other title pushes Gainax's "chaos theory" of production more to the wall than "Gunbuster," a hard-SF space-opera war story reminiscent of both Joe Haldeman and E.E. 'Doc' Smith, a schoolgirl romance where competition is played out on the training fields of Earth and space, an arsenal of fantastic mecha designs locked and loaded with in-jokes, and even a set of educational shorts! At various turns satirical, sweeping, sexy, silly, poignant and stunningly dramatic, "Gunbuster" is a roller-coaster classic.

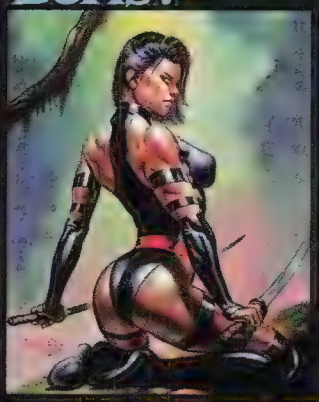
Fleer/SkyBox International Presents:

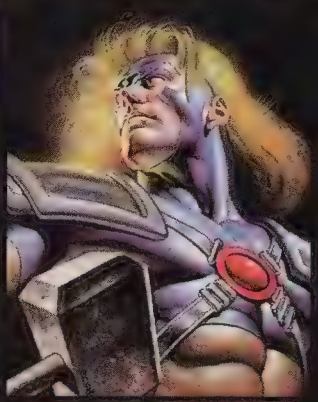
The Boris or Julie? Contest

Not only are Julie Bell and Boris Vallejo two of the best fantasy artists around, but they're also married to each other. So naturally, we here at *Wizard* feel obligated to stir things up a little and make them compete against each other. Y'see, the new Fleer/SkyBox *Marvel Masterpieces* card set features 100 new paintings from master artists Julie Bell and Boris Vallejo, and all you have to do to win one of these highly sought after paintings is drive a wedge between a happily married couple.

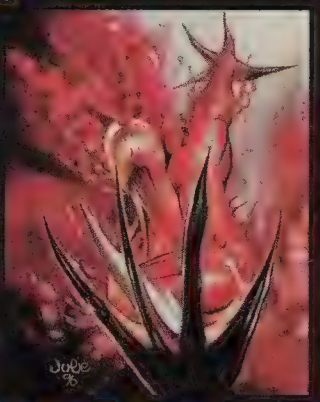
contest

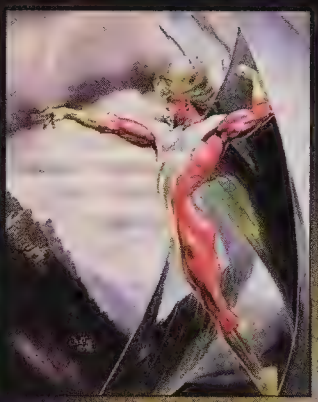
Boris?





or Julie Bell?





Huh? I Get to be a Homewrecker?

That's right. Pictured here are three Julie Bell paintings from Marvel Masterpieces and three Boris works from the same set. Which artist do you like better? Julie or Boris? Just tell us and you could win! A random drawing among all you instigators of divorce proceedings will determine winners of:

Our Grand Prize (1): One lucky winner will get the Boris Vallejo original of our ol' pal Wolverine shown here! And even if you don't get that loot, you still could get one of our...

Second Prizes (15): Fifteen other winners will each get a box of Fleer/SkyBox Marvel Masterpieces, which, as it just so happens, might contain winning tickets which fans can redeem for original Julie & Boris art of their own. Keen, eh?

This month's contest is sponsored by Fleer/SkyBox International, and we think they're just ginchy.

Fleer SkyBox International®

Prenuptial Legal Agreement

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone [illegible] employees of Wizard Press, Fleer/SkyBox International and their immediate families or Michelle Triola Marvin. Who is she? Beats us—Jim McLauchlin writes these things. We're just Copy Editors. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and Boris or Julie choice on the official entry form, a standard postcard or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Boris or Julie? Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes [illegible] in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law [illegible] inconsistent with the purposes [illegible] we're forwarding all your votes [illegible] know, work out and are super-buff [illegible] you didn't vote for where you'll find [illegible] card [illegible] in your ass can be [illegible] quarters by December [illegible] lost, late, [illegible] determined by [illegible] closing [illegible] Press [illegible] January [illegible] and a [illegible] Julie? Winners, c/o [illegible]

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Boris or Julie? Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is December 31, 1996!

Boris or Julie Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Boris or Julie? _____

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Backlash

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Marc Slayton
AGE: unknown
HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 188 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: white
EYE COLOR: blue
FIRST APPEARANCE: *StormWatch #0*
TITLE CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Backlash*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Lilitu, Zalil, Mindscape, Virtual Bob, Helspont, Talos

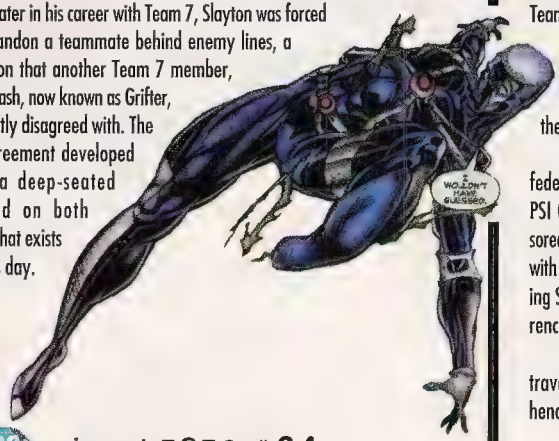
ORIGIN

Little is known about Backlash's origin; however, it is known that he is a Kherubim-human crossbreed, part alien and part man. As Kherubim/human crosses are gifted with extremely long lifespans, his birth, parentage and true origin are most likely veiled by the mists of time. Additionally, his Kherubim blood grants him the power to transform himself and his costume into a coherent mist at will.

Backlash has experienced mysterious flashbacks that suggest he has had adventures in medieval Europe, and also in feudal Japan, circa 1645. Despite extensive security probes by major intelligence agencies, the bulk of Slayton's past remains unknown to all, except himself.

What is known of his early adventures is that Slayton served with the ill-fated Team One, under Saul Bellow, who is currently known as Jacob Marlowe, sponsor of the WildC.A.T.s. Following the team's disastrous first mission, Slayton resurfaced years later as a member of Team 7. During his years with Team 7, he, along with the rest of the team, was unknowingly exposed to the Gen-Factor, resulting in the development of retractable psi-whips, tendrils of solidified telekinetic force, from the backs of his hands. The whips can also conduct psionic energy from Backlash to his opponent, resulting in temporary nervous system paralysis.

Later in his career with Team 7, Slayton was forced to abandon a teammate behind enemy lines, a decision that another Team 7 member, Cole Cash, now known as Grifter, violently disagreed with. The disagreement developed into a deep-seated hatred on both sides that exists to this day.



Having been a major player in the covert intelligence community for years, Slayton was tapped by the United Nations to train field operatives of StormWatch at the time of the organization's founding. Due to his involvement with StormWatch, Slayton was chosen as the leader of StormWatch Prime, the organization's superpowered strike force.

Following a disastrous mission in Kuwait, Backlash resigned from active StormWatch duty, and settled into his role as trainer of StormWatch recruits. Following his resignation from active duty, Slayton became involved with StormWatch agent Diane LaSalle.

LaSalle was later captured by the Daemonite lord S'ryn, during an attack against StormWatch. To save her, Slayton broke into the maximum security facility known as Purgatory Max and helped Amanda Reed, a former criminal known as Taboo, escape so that she could use her powers to help him rescue LaSalle. While the two were eventually able to rescue LaSalle, Slayton and Reed developed an affection for each other, and have since become inseparable.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Slayton and Reed shared many adventures, more often than not one step ahead of the authorities, who considered Slayton a criminal for helping Reed escape from prison. On many occasions, Slayton has joined with his former teammates from Team 7 to thwart Daemonite plans for world domination.

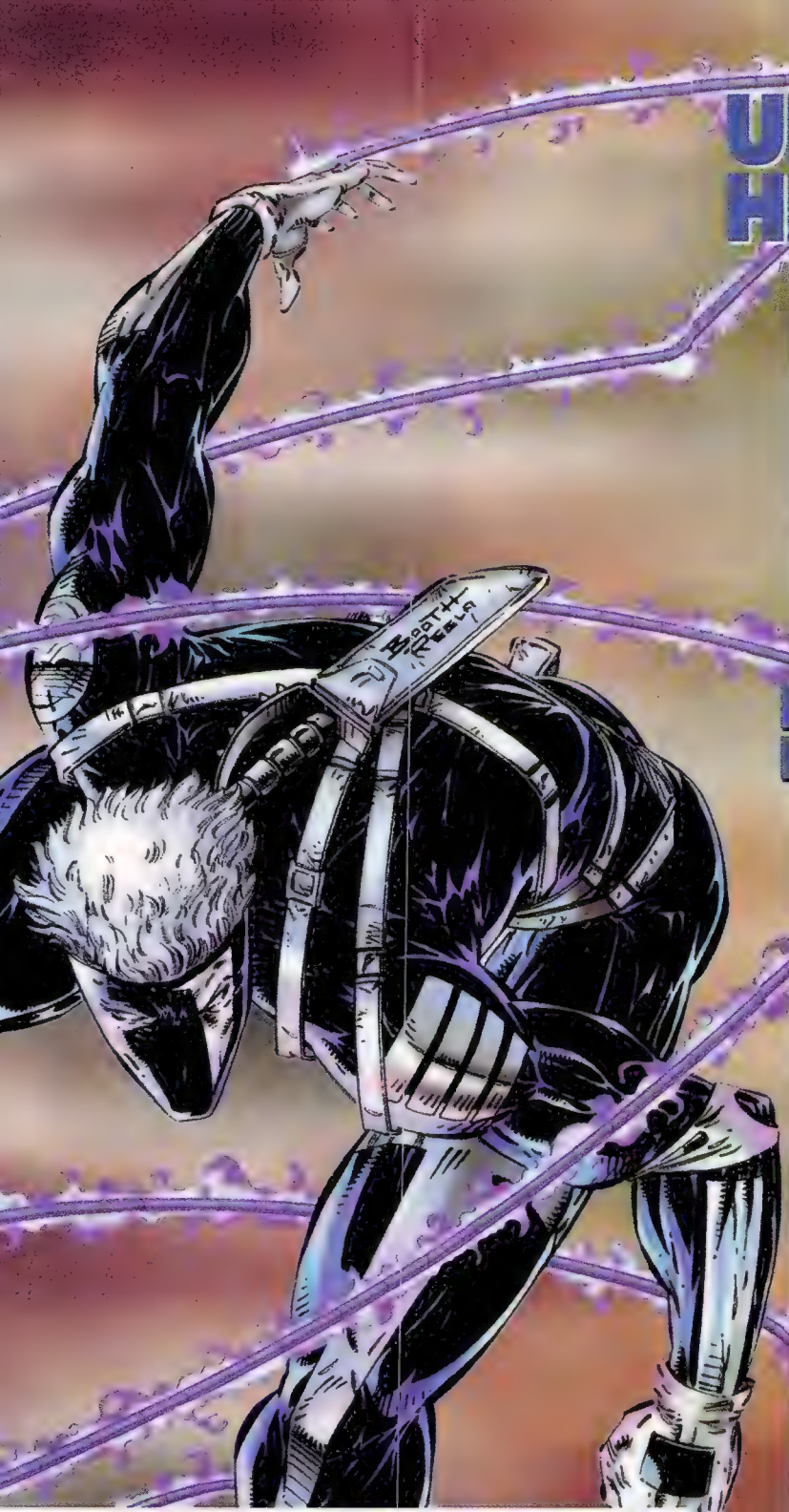
In a battle with the vampiress Lilitu and her henchman Zalil, Slayton was so severely injured that his body went into a deathlike comatose state. While he was in this condition, his body expelled the Gen-Factor. However, Slayton still possessed his psi-whips, although in an altered form.

Recently, Slayton's world has been shaken by the revelation that he has a daughter, Jodi, from an affair years ago in Japan. Inspired by her father, Jodi has taken the name Crimson, and hopes to be a superhero, a plan her father strongly opposes. Jodi's arrival has also reluctantly placed Reed in the unlikely position of a mother figure.

Slayton recently joined with his comrades from Team 7 once again, when they traveled to Gamorra Island to oppose the threat of Damocles and Kaizen Gamorra. The battle over, Slayton, Reed and Jodi returned to the states, where they found themselves under arrest by the government.

In return for Taboo's full pardon from federal charges, Slayton has agreed to lead PSI Ops, a United States government-sponsored Super Powered Being police force charged with keeping the peace among America's growing SPB population. Additionally, the team investigates paranormal occurrences that suggest the involvement of empowered beings.

As the reluctant leader of PSI Ops, Slayton, with Reed at his side, now travels across the country investigating strange occurrences and apprehending SPB criminals.



UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

The book will take on a slightly lighter tone as *Backlash* #25 and #26 help establish the PSI Ops team, and send them on their first missions together. Following this, Backlash will finally learn his true origin, why his parents died, and why he never knew he was half-Kherubim until a Daemonite revealed the fact to him in issue #6. Nothing is set in stone, but guest appearances by many WildStorm characters are a safe bet during the revelation of his origin, and some rumors abound about Backlash having some pretty well known parents in the WildStorm universe. *Backlash* co-writer Brett Booth also revealed that plans are in the works to further explore Taboo's symbiotic armor, which is made from the skin of one of Earth's original vampires. Also, since Taboo's suit is the prototype, readers will learn who has the real suit of armor.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

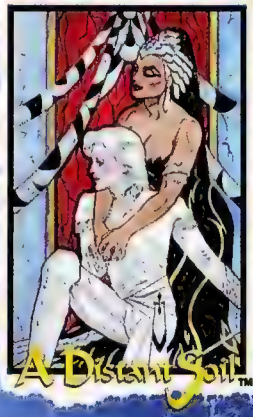
- ***Backlash* #6**—After months of fighting and searching, Slayton finally frees LaSalle from S'ryn's grip. See Backlash turn into mist and go inside a Daemonite! See the Daemonite go boom as he returns to his human form inside the ugly bugger!
- ***Backlash* #8**—Part of the "WildStorm Rising" crossover, this issue demonstrates just why Backlash is called a hero. Backlash infiltrates Helspont's downed ship, and takes him on *mano a mano* in a battle the hero just can't win.
- ***Backlash* #14**—Backlash, aided by the Caribbean hero Serge, whups Zalil's butt in a big, ugly way. This issue also sheds a little light on just how long this Backlash guy has been kicking around, anyway.
- ***Backlash* #18**—Backlash vs. StormWatch: no quarter given, none taken. 'Lash takes on his old team when they show up at the door, ready to haul his can to the lockup for treason. A great, cathartic battle that allows Backlash to really show why he was StormWatch's trainer.
- ***Backlash* #22**—While Taboo testifies in front of a panel of inquiry, Backlash reluctantly agrees to lead PSI Ops for the U.S. government. The fun really kicks in when Taboo's testimony is interrupted by enemy agents who don't want her to talk...or live anymore.

SIMILAR TASTES

If *Backlash* floats your boat, make sure to check out these other action-packed books with more than a hint of government conspiracy and other weirdness, as picked by the *Wizard* staff: the past year's worth of *WildC.A.T.s*, the Jim Steranko-drawn issues of *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* and the early issues of Mike Grell's *Jon Sable, Freelance.* W

Matthew Brady, who wrote about Spider-Man's return in this issue, also has psi-whips that come out of the backs of his hands. Instead of fighting for justice, he just uses them to pick his nose and scratch his back. Not in that order.

THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANYTHING LIKE US BEFORE...



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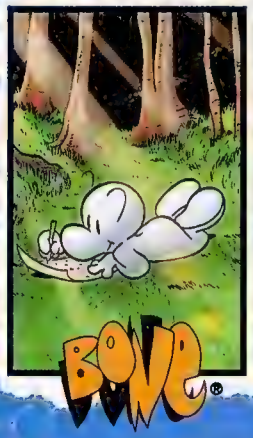

THE MOST POWERFUL LINEUP IN THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY KEEPS GETTING STRONGER!

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by Joyce M. Steel

Wolverine Carves Up the Cards for Thanksgiving

Fleer/SkyBox showcases everybody's favorite mutant this November in *Fleer Ultra X-Men: Wolverine*, a 100-card gem that's the first set ever to feature all-new painted art on the fronts and an original penciled comic on the backs. Artists on the set include Boris Vallejo, Julie Bell, Joe Jusko and the Hildebrandt Brothers doin' a 9-card HoloFX chase set (1:4). A 3-card Mirage set (1:24) chases the series (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $2.49).

WITCHBLADE CARDS!

Top Cow introduces its new trading card imprint in November with a set based on its white-hot *Witchblade*. The 90-carder boasts all original art and text from the *Witchblade* team and special guests, including hotshots like co-creator Marc Silvestri, Arthur Adams, Bill Sienkiewicz and Walt Simonson. Chasing the set are a parallel foil-bordered set, 9 foil-etched puzzle cards, 3 thermographic cards and a lenticular card (one chase card per eight card pack, suggested retail $1.95).

RARE CAP CARDS

Remember "Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" and the coveted "golden ticket"? Fleer/SkyBox has a new take on the concept for the 1996 *Marvel Masterpieces* series in mid-December. Nine black-and-white cards featuring Julie Bell's rendition of Captain America will be randomly inserted in the 100-card set, and one more will be raffled off by mail. If you're one of the lucky winners, you'll get an original Bell or hubby Boris Vallejo painting done exclusively for the set. Plus, there are two additional levels of chase cards: a 9-card E-Motion set featuring Vallejo and Bell art (1:5), and a 3-card embossed set (1:8) (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $4.99).

MARS ATTACKS!

Topps hits the silver screen this holiday season with its *Mars Attacks!* set, based on the upcoming film from Warner Bros. The 72-card Widevision series features Martian mayhem enhanced by computer-generated imagery, and a 6-card, randomly inserted Martian-Foil chase set showcasing original computer-generated art (nine cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

THE FORCE IN 3-D

Celebrating the re-release of "Star Wars," Topps also introduces a new card format in *Star Wars: A New Hope 3Di* which contains multiple levels of three-dimensional imagery. The 63-carder's in Widevision, so the 3-D effect is, well, *wider*. A Death Star Multi-motion card and one of three Star Wars Trilogy: Special Edition promo cards will be packed in each box (three cards per pack, suggested retail $3.00).

MORE BAD GIRLS

Krome Productions is putting out a couple of all-Chromium series. *Lady Death* makes her third 90-card trip to Chromium-land. Chasing this set are four different parallel sets, one each in ClearChrome and HoloChrome (one per box), Mystery Blackmask Chromium (one per pack) and Mystery Fractal Chromium (three per box). Look for a five-card Fractal Chromium set (one per box) and 500 Brian Pulido/Stephen Hughes double-autographed cards (five cards per pack, suggested retail $2.50).

In December *Razor* fans'll wanna check out the *Metal & Flesh* 90-card series. The randomly inserted chase line-up consists of five HoloChromes, 2 Photo HoloChromes, 2,500 various artists' autographed cards and four Chromium Promos. Don't miss the compact *Razor* comic in every display box, which comes with a Chromium cover in every fifth box or a HoloChrome cover in every tenth. One box per case is a Hot Box of all-HoloChrome cards (six Chromium cards per pack, suggested retail $1.50).

PARTING SHOTS

- In November, WildStorm trots out its troubled-teen tale, *DV8*, in a 90-carder chased by eight oversized cover cards and mini-cels (eight cards per pack, but no established retail price has been set yet).
- In December, Dynamic Forces kicks *Ash* into the card world for the first time in a 90-card event chased with nine randomly inserted Chromium cards and a superchase card autographed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti (1:3 boxes) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).
- CORRECTION: Fleer/Skybox reports that *Batman Holo* (reported in *Wizard* #63 as two cards per pack with a suggested retail of $4.99) will, in fact, be distributed at four cards per pack, with a suggested retail of $1.99.

Joyce Steel once wrestled an oompah-loompah for a Wonka everlasting gobstopper. The oompah-loompah kicked ass.

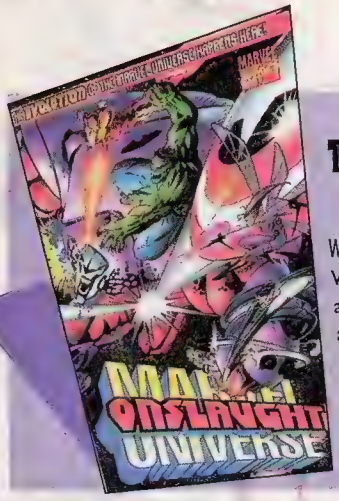
"Toilet's free." The new *Fleer Ultra X-Men: Wolverine* series

"Wow...this acne really scabs over after a while." Top Cow's Witchblade *card series*

"Whoop...that'll teach me to squat after scofin' down Taco Bell." Dynamic Forces new *Ash* cards

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are October's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. ONSLAUGHT: MARVEL UNIVERSE #1

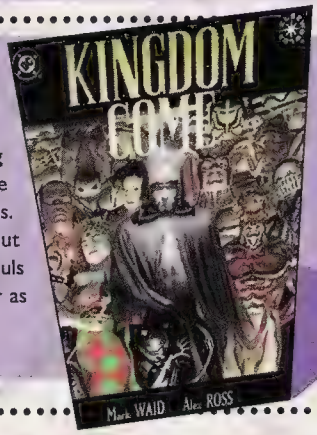
WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Joe Bennett

What in tarnation is going on in the Marvel Universe? First Professor Xavier goes monkey-nuts, and now all the cool non-mutant heroes of Marvel have disappeared in a final battle with the evil Onslaught. Say it ain't so, Stan! Why couldn't it have been that damn Spider-Clone who disappeared? Anyway, that's what happens in this dramatic conclusion to the Onslaught Saga. Lobdell, Waid and Kubert wrap everything up in this nice, pretty little package, just in time for Lee and Liefield's "Heroes Reborn" books (these, too, should be pretty hot—just check out lucky #7 this month). So bitch about it all you want, but just make sure you get your copies of *Onslaught: Marvel Universe* #1, 'cause they, too, just may disappear.

2. KINGDOM COME #1

WRITER: Mark Waid ARTIST: Alex Ross

What in the hell happened to Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids? They used to be such nice young fellas, jamming with their junkyard instruments and having a "good time." And now, they're responsible for half the crime in the fair city of Gotham. We blame Mark Waid and Alex Ross. These two have single-handedly turned the future DC Universe into a grim and gritty (but beautifully painted) cesspool, where the likes of Fat Albert and his gangsters have sold their souls for some crack cocaine and a MAC-10. Oh, the humanity! So get your copy while you can, or as Rudy put it, you'll be "like school on a Saturday…no class."

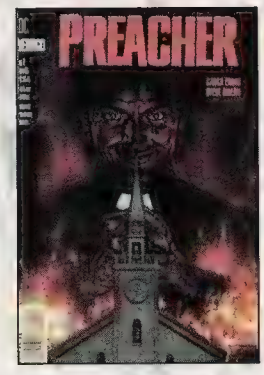


3. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Y'know, there was a time when tough chicks were confined to such activities as roller derby and mud wrestling. Oh, there was the occasional Jell-O wrestler or foxy boxer, but hey, the glass ceiling kept most of those tough women from reaching their full potential. Well, not anymore—thanks to trailblazers like Sara Pezzini, a.k.a. Witchblade, who blew the stereotypes when she snagged the power of the unearthly morphing Witchblade gauntlet. She showed the world that tough chicks can wear skimpy outfits and still hack villains to death without the hindrance of mud, Jell-O or excessive clothes. You've come a long way, baby.

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

Can you imagine the good Reverend Jesse Custer as a Catholic priest? Of course, confession would be the worst part. You would humbly confess your sins and he would probably respond something like this: "For your penance, say two Hail Marys and go @#*& yourself, my son." Just the visual alone would make most people convert to snake-handling. But before we give Ennis and Dillon any more ideas, let's just conclude by saying that *Preacher* #1 is almost as hot as the place we're gonna be sent after this blasphemous statement sees print.

NUMBER FIVE

5. ONSLAUGHT: X-MEN #1

WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid
ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Dan Green

Onslaught! Onslaught! Onslaught! (We kinda feel like Jan Brady.) That's all most of us heard all summer. Well, it's over now. Onslaught may have disappeared from the Marvel Universe, but he has yet to disappear from the Top 10. This storyline has proven to be highly popular with the average comic geek. You got a great creative team, a nutty professor and a whole lot of X-Men. That's a sure-fire combination to suck the cash out of your pockets, even without the mental persuasion of the world's most powerful telepath!

6. HITMAN #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

By now, most of you realize that Garth Ennis is responsible for more deaths than Dr. Jack Kevorkian, polyunsaturated fats and Sir Walter Raleigh combined. The good thing is that most of these deaths happened in the DC Universe and not ours. The bad thing is there just don't seem to be enough copies of *Hitman* #1 out there to satisfy all you bloodthirsty fanboys. This telepathic assassin with X-ray vision seems to have struck a chord with the death-crazed comic consumer. However, if you cannot get a copy of this slaughter-filled issue, we suggest you start on an all-lard-and-cigarette diet.

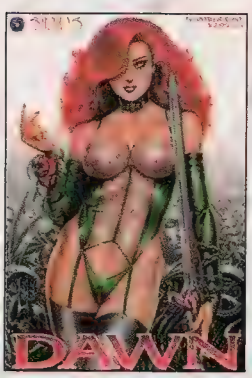
NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

Wahoo! Jim Lee's on the Fantastic Four! And it's about time "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" started living up to its name. Let's face it, before Jim, the FF had been about as fresh as that half-eaten bologna sandwich under your bed. Y'know, the one you forgot about. Yeah, anyway, the writer-artist has given the FF a brand-new look and a brand-new origin. On top of that, the Doomster appears in the very first issue. You know how we know it's gonna work? Hey, when was the last time you saw the *Fantastic Four* in the Top 10? Try never.



NUMBER EIGHT

8. DAWN #1

WRITER: Joseph Michael Linsner
ARTIST: Joseph Michael Linsner

Dawn, the goddess of rebirth, my ass! Hey, if she was the goddess of rebirth, there would have been more than one printing of this much-sought-after issue! This, of course, means all the Dawn fans are scrambling to buy the few copies that do exist out there. And why the heck not? Linsner paints one mean lingerie-garbed redhead with a long, stiff, pointy sword, and his writing ain't too shabby, either. Goddess of rebirth, maybe. But were just glad she's not the goddess of afterbirth. YEEUUUCCH!!!

9. THE X-FILES #1

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha
ARTIST: Charles Adlard

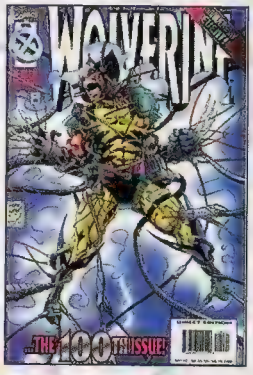
Don't you think that if Scully and Mulder were really government agents, they'd've been busted down to a meter maid and traffic cop by now? I mean, they couldn't prove aliens existed even if the Martian Manhunter came up and bit them on the buttocks (which is something we'd pay big bucks to see if someone had it on videotape). So, the real reason this issue must be selling is that Petrucha and Adlard put out some high-quality stories of intrigue and mystery. What they should really do is put Scooby-Doo and Shaggy on the case. Then you'd see some real results, hot dammit!

NUMBER NINE

10. WOLVERINE #100

WRITER: Larry Hama
ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Dan Green

Hey, Wusserine ain't so tough. Genesis tries to put a little adamantium in him, and what does Wolvie do? He throws a tantrum and runs off like a little schoolgirl who's just seen a big ol' waterbug. And if it wasn't for the return of Elektra, the resurrection of Apocalypse and a rat with a smiley face painted on his butt, this issue would only be filled with some violent killings and all-out superhero brawls. Hey, who the hell wants to see that?!



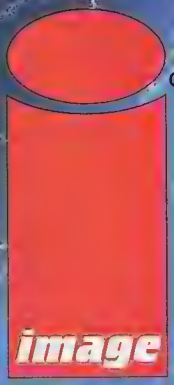
NUMBER TEN

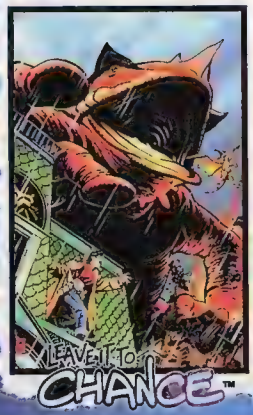
THE NEXT TEN

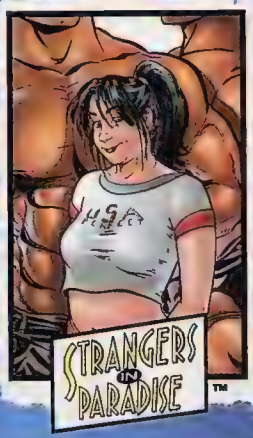
THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. **PREACHER** #2 DC
12. **WITCHBLADE** #2 IMAGE
13. **SHI** #1 CRUSADE
14. **SPAWN** #1 IMAGE
15. **DC VERSUS MARVEL** #1 DC/MARVEL
16. **ANGELA** #1 IMAGE
17. **SPAWN** #9 IMAGE
18. **AVENGELYNE** (MINI-SER.) #1 MAXIMUM
19. **KINGDOM COME** #4 DC
20. **SHI** #2 CRUSADE

THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANYTHING LIKE US BEFORE...







THE MOST POWERFUL LINEUP IN THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY KEEPS GETTING STRONGER!

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WIZARD™ TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of SEPTEMBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for September. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).

1. Fantastic Four #1 (Marvel)

2. **Iron Man #1 (Marvel)**
3. **Avengers #1 (Marvel)**
4. **Captain America #1 (Marvel)**
5. Uncanny X-Men #338 (Marvel)
6. X-Men #58 (Marvel)
7. Wolverine #107 (Marvel)
8. **X.S.E. #1 (Marvel)**
9. **Incredible Hulk #447 (Marvel)**
10. **Spectacular Spider-Man #240 (Marvel)**
11. **Elektra #1 (Marvel)**
12. **Spawn #54 (Image)**
13. **Curse of the Spawn #1 (Image)**
14. X-Men '96 (Marvel)
15. Generation X #21 (Marvel)
16. **Magneto #1 (Marvel)**
17. X-Man #21 (Marvel)
18. X-Force #60 (Marvel)
19. X-Factor #128 (Marvel)
20. Cable #37 (Marvel)
21. X-Men: The Rise of Apocalypse (Marvel)
22. Generation X '96 (Marvel)
23. Excalibur #102 (Marvel)
24. **Deathblow/Wolverine #2 (Image)**
25. Amazing Spider-Man #417 (Marvel)
26. X-Men/ClanDestine #3 (Marvel)
27. **The Final Night #1 (DC)**
28. Spider-Man #74 (Marvel)
29. **The Final Night #2 (DC)**
30. **The Final Night #3 (DC)**
31. **The Final Night #4 (DC)**
32. Sensational Spider-Man #10 (Marvel)
33. X-Men: Pryde & Wisdom #3 (Marvel)
34. **DV8 #2 (Image)**
35. **Star Trek: Voyager #1 (Marvel)**
36. Batman #536 (DC)
37. **Star Trek Unlimited #1 (Marvel)**
38. **The X-Files #22 (Topps)**
39. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #1 (Marvel)**
40. **Parallax: Emerald Night #1 (DC)**
41. **Journey into Mystery #503 (Marvel)**
42. Star Wars: S. of the Empire #5 (D.H.)
43. Detective Comics #703 (DC)
44. **Supergirl #3 (DC)**
45. Superman #117 (DC)
46. Sensational Spider-Man '96 (Marvel)
47. Action Comics #727 (DC)
48. Adventures of Superman #540 (DC)
49. Superman: The Man of Steel #62 (DC)
50. S. Wars: B. Fett—W. the F. Lady Swings #1 (D.H.)
51. Spider-Man: Redemption #3 (Marvel)
52. The X-Files: Season One #3 (Topps)
53. Green Lantern #80 (DC)
54. Shattered Image #4 (Image)
55. **Robin #35 (DC)**
56. **Nightwing #2 (DC)**
57. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #56 (DC)
58. The Flash #119 (DC)
59. Justice League: A Mids. Nightmare #3 (DC)
60. Cyberforce #27 (Image)
61. Batman: Leg. of the Dark Knight #88 (DC)
62. Preacher #19 (DC)
63. Catwoman #39 (DC)
64. Preacher Special: Saint of Killers #4 (DC)
65. **Superman Adventures #1 (DC)**
66. **Purgatori: The Vampires Myth #2 (Chaos!)**
67. Superman: The Man of Steel Annual #5 (DC)
68. The Dreaming #6 (DC)
69. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #15 (Marvel)
70. WetWorks #21 (Image)
71. Star Wars: X-Wing R.S.—B. Tat. #4 (D.H.)
72. Wonder Woman #115 (DC)
73. Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual #4 (DC)
74. Professor X and the X-Men #13 (Marvel)
75. Venom: The Hunger #4 (Marvel)
76. Superboy #33 (DC)
77. What If? #91 (Marvel)
78. Daredevil #358 (Marvel)
79. Uncanny Origins #3 (Marvel)
80. Azrael #23 (DC)
81. Teen Titans #2 (DC)
82. **Astro City (Vol. 2) #2 (Homage)**
83. Silver Surfer #122 (Marvel)
84. **Aquaman #26 (DC)**
85. The Maxx #27 (Image)
86. **Total Justice #1 (DC)**
87. Glory/Celestine: Dark Angel #1 (Image)
88. **Hitman #8 (DC)**
89. 2099: World of Tomorrow #2 (Marvel)
90. Avengelyne #6 (Maximum)
91. Dark Chylde #4 (Maximum)
92. Backlash #24 (Image)
93. **Hitman #7 (DC)**
94. Marvel Fanfare #3 (Marvel)
95. **Total Justice #2 (DC)**
96. Grifter #3 (Image)
97. **Total Justice #3 (DC)**
98. Impulse #19 (DC)
99. Artemis: Requiem #6 (DC)
100. Bone #26 (Image)

AT THE TOP:

Marvel demolished the competition this month, taking over the Top 10 and most of the Top 25, mostly thanks to the four "Heroes Reborn" start-up books. With the Jim Lee-filled *FF* in the lead, these books confirmed retailers' predictions that fans would eat up Lee and Rob Liefeld's latest works. Retailers themselves bought up extra copies because of the special incentive program that gave them free variant editions for a certain number of books ordered. September also brought several other Marvel powerhouses: *X.S.E.* #1, a focus on X-star Bishop; *Incredible Hulk* #447, which launched a new era for the monstrous hero, with a new artist, Mike Deodato Jr.; the opener to the story returning the true Spidey in *SSM*#240; *Elektra* #1, which gave Marvel its highest ranking for an ongoing superheroine title in years; and *Magneto*#1, starting the ex-villain's first mini-series. Image's brand-new Spawn series (and the regular title) sneaked in there, as did the conclusion to Deathblow's crossover with Wolverine (a Marvel hero, of course).

IN THE MIDDLE:

DC's own four-issue market attack—its latest intracompany crossover *The Final Night*—fared well order-wise; retailers were banking on a fun story teaming up their customers' favorite heroes, and its being weekly helped increase interest. The important *Parallax* tie-in starring Hal Jordan scored high as well. As expected, *DV8* sunk down from August's huge #2 showing to what will probably be its normal order level. Marvel's *Star Trek* line hit the highest numbers for ongoing *Trek* titles in years, with *Voyager* the surprise leader. *The X-Files'* slow rise back to sales greatness is possibly due to the show's return to new episodes. *Thor*'s replacement title, *Journey into Mystery*, came in at close to the hero's regular numbers. *Supergirl* once again beat the regular Superman titles, as *Robin* and *Nightwing* flew over two Bat-books.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Purgatori's second issue took in fair enough orders—she's holding up well. DC titles to watch include *Superman Adventures* (the solidly ordered adaptation of the new animated series), *Aquaman* (which has been slowly climbing up the chart) and *Hitman* (benefiting from a two-issue push this month). The company's toy line-connected *Total Justice* mini did all right, although non-buyers might have dismissed it as a kids' book. Homage's incarnation of *Astro City* is doing very well, having risen 18 notches since last month—the Homage label is apparently helping.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by the *Wizard* staff

"HEROES REBORN" REACTIONS

Though only on the racks a short time as this issue of *Wizard* went to press, the four Marvel "Heroes Reborn" titles by Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld—*Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, and *Captain America* and *Avengers*, respectively—are a moderate success, despite initial fan apprehension. We say "moderate" in that sales were somewhat disappointing for the first issues of all four titles—though retailers agree that they certainly sold more issues of all four books than they did the previous month. It seems most fans were just too curious to miss out on all the revamps.

Currently leading the pack in terms of favorable response is surprisingly not *Fantastic Four*—the most anticipated and best-selling title of the bunch—but *Iron Man*. The deciding factor? "It was such a departure from Iron Man's original origin, that it made it contemporary," said Mitchell Stowe of Fairfield, Conn. "I also enjoyed the Hulk tie-in."

The only negative reaction so far on *Iron Man*? Phillip Chin of San Francisco, Calif., summed it up best: "Whilce Portacio's art is sometimes impossible to follow. It's almost too flashy for its own good."

Captain America #1—so-so art, but interesting concept

Fantastic Four also got positive reviews. "I liked the nostalgic feel it had," said William Beckman of Chicago, Ill.

While most fans gave Jim Lee's art the expected nod, the coloring was echoed by most as being "too dark."

Response on *Captain America* was consistent: The art is so-so, but the conspiracy concept surrounding the character is somewhat interesting. "The art wasn't Rob Liefeld's best," said Greg Fried of Phoenix, Ariz. "Bodies were sometimes *really* out of proportion, panel-to-panel continuity was pretty screwy and background art was lacking a number of times." But others claimed that they wouldn't have given *Cap* the time of day before this event happened.

Since *Avengers* #1 was just hitting the stands at press time, it was too early to get fan reaction.

Apparently "Heroes Reborn" has something going for it besides pure name power. We'll see if it can sustain fan interest as the projected year-long experiment goes on.

Preacher Madness

While DC/Vertigo's *Preacher* continues to sizzle in the back issue market, here's an example of how *Preacher* Power can affect a book's desirability in a negative way: Since creator Garth Ennis has gone on public record to say that the Genesis of *Preacher* has no connection to the Genesis from *Hellblazer* #59-#61, the latter issues have gone *down* in demand.

Curiously, *Absolute Vertigo*'s desirability continues to climb, even though it is not the true first appearance of *Preacher*'s main characters. (We have concluded that *Preacher* #1, which contains the original material previewed in *AV*, is the true debut.)

And the sizzling effect doesn't end with *Preacher*. The spinoff mini-series *Saint of Killers* is doing tremendously well, and it's expected that *Preacher Special: The Story of You-Know-Who* #1, starring Arseface, will have a similar amount of success.

One important market note to DC/Vertigo: *Preacher* is successful because of its *quality*. Flooding the market with too many spinoffs by a prolific Garth Ennis could fizzle its sizzle.

***Poison Elves* is carving out its own market niche**

Sirius Situation

What do books like *Dawn*, *Animal Mystic* and *Poison Elves* have in common? Besides getting major fan attention in the current and back-issue department, the three are published by Sirius Entertainment, one of the fastest-growing small publishers in the industry. (And we're not even mentioning two other Sirius books, *Akiko* and *Wandering Star*, which also have a fair amount of buzz with fans and critics.)

Astute fans might want to keep their eyes on any new material Sirius plans on releasing in the future. Since the publisher seems to be able to pick up on reader needs, one never knows when or where the next *Dawn* or *Poison Elves* will make a splash.

Tiny "Title" Waves

For those fans who don't study every price guide entry, you might find it interesting to note that there's a growing wave of similar titles generating heat. And they *don't* star the X-Men or Batman!

No, instead they're small press titles that have a handful or so issues to their name. Titles like *Milk & Cheese*, *Starchild*, *Scud*, *Too Much Coffee Man*, *Strangers in Paradise*, *Snowman* and the *Warrior Nun Areala* spinoff *Shotgun Mary* are all in demand in the back-issue market, according to retailers.

And hey, most of these books are pretty darn good reads, to boot. So, if you plan on scopin' these puppies out, do it now before you can't find 'em anywhere. W

Wizard's Top 10 Hottest Writers

1 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

2 **Mark Waid**
Kingdom Come, Flash

Al Ortego

3 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman

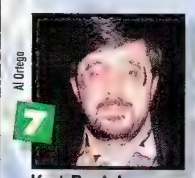
Al Ortego

4 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman

J. Schuyler

5 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

6 **Karl Kesel**
Daredevil



Al Ortego

7 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City

J. Schuyler

8 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern

Al Ortego

9 **James Robinson**
Starman

10 **Jeph Loeb**
Captain America, Avengers

Wizard's Top 10 Hottest Artists

Al Ortego

1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

Al Ortego

2 **Jim Lee**
Fantastic Four

Gabe Fulcito

3 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

4 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen13

Al Ortego

5 **Alex Ross**
Kingdom Come

6 **Joe Linsner**
Dawn

Al Ortego

7 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

8 **Billy Tucci**
Shi

9 **Humberto Ramos**
Impulse, Ash/22 Brides

10 **Mike Wieringo**
Sensational Spider-Man

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Hottest Writers and Artists lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

Wizard's Up & Coming Creator

STEVE EPTING

This artist has brought a fresh look to *Avengers* and *X-Factor*, and has November's *Team X/Team 7* (left) and March's *X-Men Annual '97* in the works. His depiction of action makes you feel like you're right in the thick of it, and he infuses people with dramatic personality (he recently revamped the looks of characters like Mystique, Forge and Sabretooth).

From the smallest panel (Black Knight emotionally looking back at Crystal in *Avengers #375*) to the largest (Sabretooth crashing out of his tube in *X-Factor #119*), he packs a lively punch into all his work.

X-Factor editor Kelly Corvese says, "I like his tight pencils. His men look handsome and his women beautiful; his heroes look heroic and his villains villainous. He knows how to define characters, and make them look distinctive." ●

survey: issue 64

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at?
If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide.
(Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers. You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1.
2.
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GOLDEN AGE PRICE GUIDE LISTINGS

We'd like to know how you all feel about these. Do you think we should leave them in the Price Guide to be more complete, or should we use the space for additional Modern Age books? Let us know which option you think makes for a better guide. Thanks.

let your voice be heard

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BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month the Rainbow Raider invites you into the new "Bullpen"

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

This month, we'll be rating your comic trivia knowledge against that which no human eyes should ever gaze upon: the stuff under Galactus' bed! The higher your score, the more unsettling the discovery.

Score	Rank
0-4	Big ones.
5-14	The Ultimate Stimulator.
15-19	Ego, the Living Planet, crying and softly mumbling, "Find a happy place, find a happy place."
20	A blow-up Celestial doll with a really surprised look on its face (It's either Jemiah the Analyzer or Oneg the Prober. We can never tell those two apart.).

1. For what large, evil corporation did Hank McCoy—a.k.a. the Beast—once work?
A) Roxxon Industries
B) Stane International
C) Brand Corporation
D) S.T.A.R. Labs

2. Which of the following rings doesn't Iron Man's foe, the Mandarin, have?
A) the Mento-Intensifier Ring
B) the Levitation Ring
C) the Black Light Ring
D) the Vortex Beam Ring

3. Before she became Lady Death's arch-nemesis Purgatori, who was Sakkara, the slave girl, married to?
A) the general of the Egyptian army
B) Set, the Egyptian god of death
C) the king of Egypt
D) the queen of Egypt

4. Which two of the following Avengers become members of the Guardians of the Galaxy in the future?
A) Captain Marvel and Moondragon
B) Quasar and Starfox
C) Yellowjacket II and Wonder Man
D) Hercules and Human Torch I

5. In the 30th century, what language does the Legion of Super-Heroes speak?
A) Interlac
B) Daxamite
C) Kerillian
D) the language of love (And boy, can Making-them-sheep-nervous Lad verbalize!)

6. Which of the following characters did not belong to the Hanna-Barbera superteam, the Impossibles (who are back on TV!)?
A) Fluid Man
B) Dart Man
C) Coil Man
D) Multi Man

7. When Aztek came to the city of Vanity, whose identity did he assume?
A) Jake Nelson, wealthy businessman and adventurer
B) an ex-supervillain by the name of Dr. Curtis Falconer, a.k.a. the Piper
C) Sean Boyd, ex-drug dealer and current junkie
D) Abe Froman, the "Sausage King of Chicago"

8. Who is the evil manipulator currently pulling Youngblood's strings?
A) Graves
B) Battlestone
C) Lord Dredd
D) Umm...they still publish *Youngblood*?

9. Vertigo's Flex Mentallo allies himself with this groovy superteam:
A) The Supreme Legion.
B) The Legion of Justice.
C) The Legion of Powers.
D) The Legion of Legions.

10. In his 500th issue, Thor found this hero in Asgard:
A) Dr. Strange.
B) Captain Mar-Vell.
C) Moondragon.
D) Karma.

11. Now that Magneto is young...again, and a good guy...again, what moniker does he go by?
A) Joseph
B) Joshua
C) Dr. Polaris
D) Dr. "Hey, look, I'm another once-cool Marvel villain they've screwed with and turned into a weak character."

12. What is the name of the Fighting American's teenaged sidekick?
A) Bucky
B) Ernie
C) Speedboy
D) Peter, the eager-to-please houseboy

13. Whatever happened to the Scarlet Witch's twin sons, Thomas and Simon?
A) They acquired the Legacy Virus and died during their infancy.
B) They are now in the care of Agatha Harkness, so that they'll be out of harm's way while their mom fights crime.
C) They were kidnapped by the Avengers' arch-foe, Loki, and are now being raised in Asgard by frost giants.
D) Apparently, they turned out to be a figment of the Scarlet Witch's imagination brought to life by her mutant hex power; once she realized this, they simply vanished.

15. In the "Conspiracy" plotline in *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, how were murder victims left?
A) They had their hearts cut out and replaced with a chakra stone.
B) Their throats were slashed and their torsos ripped open with the intestines flung up over their left shoulders.
C) They were decapitated and the mouths were safety-pinned back to form macabre grins.
D) They were found dead of boredom, clutching that awful "Contagion: Legacy" crossover in their icy grip.

16. Which two mutants recently battled the Onslaught-controlled Hulk?
A) Cyclops and Jubilee
B) Meltdown and Siryn
C) Wolverine and Havok
D) Storm and Cable

17. Looks like all those damn Image guys have sons they didn't know about. Where the hell did Backlash's missing son turn up?
A) He turned out to be Evo in DV8.
B) Kaizen transformed him into a brainwashed killing machine and turned him loose during the "Fire From Heaven" storyline.
C) Backlash found him in a cryogenic container in the catacombs located under I/O headquarters.
D) At an Oasis concert, wondering how anyone could like those annoying, whiny, pompous limeys.

18. Which of the following superdudes did not disappear at the end of that Onslaught debacle?
A) Quicksilver
B) Falcon
C) Dr. Doom
D) Bruce Banner

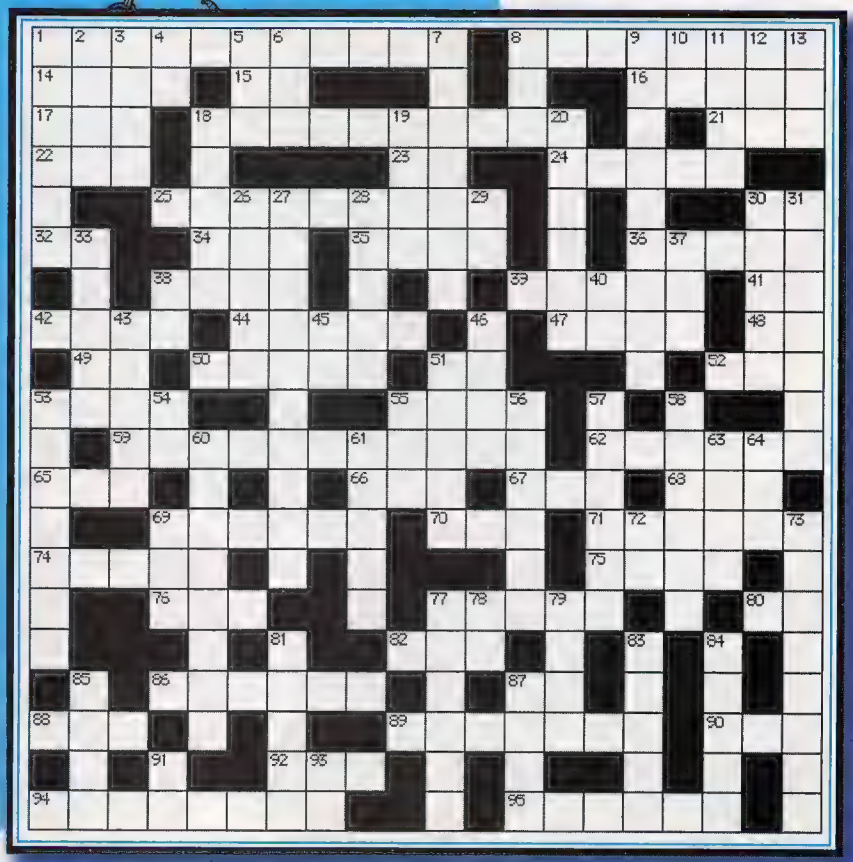
19. In their first and only mission, who did the Justice League Antarctica battle?
A) Bizarro and Despero
B) A Khund war party intent on conquering Earth
C) Felix Faust
D) a flock of fairly unpleasant flesh-eating, mutant penguins with razor-sharp teeth

20. How did Clark Kent get the egotistical superhero codename Superman?
A) Lois Lane, writing about the anonymous hero that saved the NASA space plane, called him Superman.
B) Upon seeing young Clark Kent heft a tractor in the air, Ma Kent exclaimed, "Why, you're some kind of Superman!"
C) In a holographic greeting to him, Jor-El said, "...you will be like a superman amongst the humans."
D) He once accidentally downed a quart of Spanish Fly and was locked in a Volvo with 16 midgets and, after 48 hours of electric midget madness, was dubbed "Superman."

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Don't have a hairy
The answers are on page 206.



1. Subterranean Monkeyman and O'Brien foe
8. Wally West
14. ____ *to the Empire*
15. 1988 sci-fi film with Newcomers; initials
16. *Seekers into the Mystery* girl
17. Three-part story ___
18. Aquaman's arch-foe
21. Spock has a pointy one
22. Homer says this
23. Sue Storm; init.
24. Writer Robert _____ Fleming
25. World Ash
30. *X-O Manowar* artist; init.
32. Artemis was once this; init.
34. Legionnaire M'Onel; ___ Gand
35. Married Superman's pal Pete Ross
36. One-half of major animation team
38. Spider-Man was once this
39. Blue WetWorks member
41. Creator of *Maus*; init.
42. X-Men artist ____ Kubert
44. Shi's sister
47. "...able to leap _____ buildings..."
48. X-artist with animated style; init.
49. Colossus' word for yes
50. Split-personality Metropolis superheroine
51. Creator of 44 across; init.
52. Type of powers Jean Grey has
53. Something Wolverine does
55. '70s character who met Sandman
59. Glory's daughter
62. "I can't hold it together, Captain!"
65. *Wizard* Mort ___ Raymond, TV Detective
66. Legionnaire Inferno can make things ___
67. Once a Dream Girl; Nura ___
68. Matt Murdock can't ____
69. Zatanna's dad
70. Metal Man
71. Acclaim's *Magic* imprint
74. Protector of Vanity
75. Dark Horse's imprint Blanc ____
76. Warrior ___ Areala
77. X-Factor hologram
80. Kyle Rayner; init.
82. Dalek-killing doctor
86. Killed Grizzly
87. *Adventures of Superman* artist; init.
88. Legendary artist ___ Kane
89. Thing's aunt
90. Tony Stark's first college
92. Teen team ___[13]
94. *Kingdom Come* artist
95. Captain Marvel's egghead enemy

1. Lamont Cranston
2. Dial "H" for ____
3. Nova; _____ Rider
4. New Batman's TV show
5. Teen Titan; ___ Duncan
6. Shi; ___ Ishikawa
7. comic book opposite of writing
8. Razor's friend; now Knyfe
9. Gen[13]'s strong girl
10. *Street Fighter*'s Chun ___
11. One of Preacher's favorite words
12. Aquaman rules this
13. Female version of Warlock
18. Peter Parker's paper; *Daily* _____
19. New, teleporting Superman villainess
20. Wolverine's cyborg friend
26. Tells 31 down's tales
27. Monstrous Amalgam villain
28. Colossal Boy; Gim _____
29. X-Men 2099er __ Lunática
30. old JLA mascot Carr does this
31. Preacher's vampire buddy
33. Spawn's ex-babe
37. ____ *Star Comics*
38. Where Spidey lives; init.
40. 1 across' creator; init.
43. Clark Kent's paper; _____ *Planet*
45. 23 across' husband, __ Fantastic
46. Batman and Talia were once this
51. *Backlash* writer _____ Booth
53. Killed Saint of Killers
54. __ Kent
55. fanboy idol
56. Silver Surfer's home
57. Spartan's birthplace; Gamorra ___
58. Rokk Krinn; _____ Boy
60. Vampirella's supposed home planet
61. transparent L.E.G.I.O.N. member
63. Dawn's face holds three of these
64. Blue Beetle; ___ Kord
69. Entity Comics' ninja
72. fiery "Star Trek: TNG" Ensign __
73. Namor's home
77. Nick Fury's organization
78. Green Goblin; init.
79. Ororo Munroe can create this
81. Hawkman and Angel have these
83. DV8 leader
84. Hulk radiation
85. Beta Ray ____
87. 60 down has two
91. Fatal Fiver Persuader's weapon
93. *New Warriors* writer; init.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

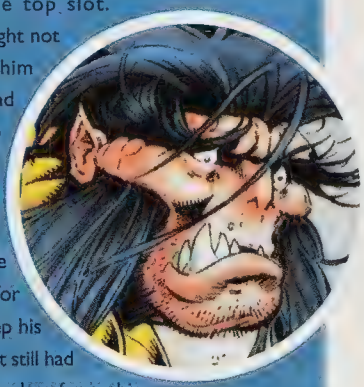
This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1. WITCHBLADE

Ooo...ingrown hair can be so unsightly. Whatcha gotta do is get a pin or something, jam it under the skin, get it beneath that troublesome hair and BINK!—yank that li'l bastard out. Or maybe Sara (that be this Witchblade chick) should just use the power of her Witchblade gauntlet to get rid of that unsightly growth. What would you rather do: battle magical evildoers while half-naked and armed with a mystical glove that you're not exactly sure how to use...or pull ingrown stuff out of your head (which you can also be half-naked for, your choice)? Pull stuff out of your head? That's why Witchblade's on this list and you're just sittin' there in front of the TV.

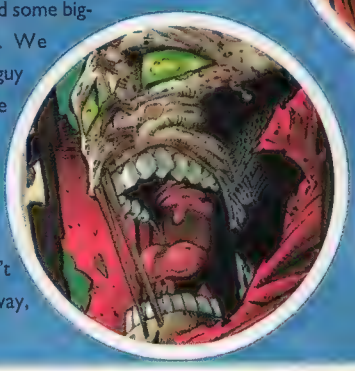
2. WOLVERINE

Hey...we just noticed that Wolvie's not in the top slot! Wolvie's always in the top slot. Hmm...wonder if this might not be a good time to give him back his adamantium (and nose). While it's neat to mess with a character every once in a while, we liked Wolvie back when he was a man (not some extra from "The Quest for Fire") who battled to keep his inner demons in check, but still had a hair-trigger temper. And as far as his adamantium goes, isn't it a little silly for Wolvie to cut through rock and climb walls with his claws when they're only made of bone? This puppy-dog, sabretoothed, Chia-haired guy ain't Wolverine.

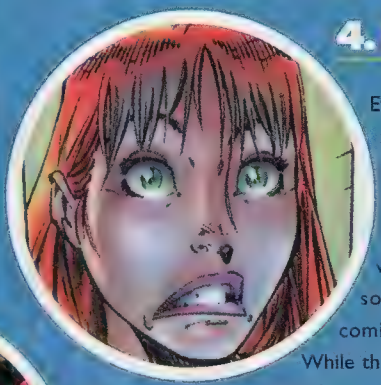


3. SPAWN

Um...did Spawn ever get his new face? We remember hearing all that hype about Spawn getting a new kisser and that McFarlane was working on it day and night since the early '60s, *and* it was going to be the coolest thing since sliced bread...but what happened? *Spawn* #50 showed up (Todd even drew some of it), but all they did was give him like a new shoelace for his head and some bigger teeth or something. We would've at least given this guy a nose—which opens up the joke: "Y'know, Spawn doesn't have a nose." "Really? Then how does he smell?" "Terrible!" Heh. Get it? Yeah, yeah, we know, don't give up our day jobs. Anyway, speaking of Fairchild...

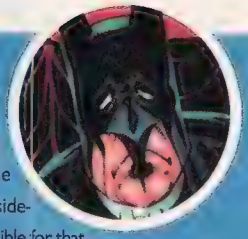


4. FAIRCHILD



Even though Spawny-guy up there may have Gen[13] beat out in popularity, we here at the mighty *Wizard* think *Gen[13]*, while still working out some kinks, is the best comic published by Image. While there are gratuitous T&A shots, the creators on the book know they're gratuitous T&A shots and they handle the whole thing tongue-in-cheek (insert your own joke here). F'rinstance, see Fairchild's kisser up there? That's the look on her face when she just washed up on shore with nothing but a small wet T-shirt, and wonders why "for some reason, I always seem to lose articles of clothing whenever we get into trouble."

5. BATMAN



Hey, Batman, your next movie has you miscast with George Clooney, three supervillains to duke it out with, two sidekicks and the same crappy people responsible for that god-awful "Batman Forever" flick (Joel Schumacher and Tim Burton). Plus, they're changing Robin's cool green, yellow and black suit for the movie AND Batgirl's gonna be Alfred's ward! Yeah, it'll make seven-gillion dollars, but dontcha wish Joe Chill shot *you* instead?

6. SUPERMAN

Speaking of Warner Brothers properties that have been poorly translated into live-action stuff, how dreadful is that "Lois & Clark" TV show? Superman looks Greek. ("Run, Krypto, bring me a souvlakia!") Lois, while great to look at, is annoyingly dim and the storylines are so inane it makes us want to go watch the "Batman" flicks. They should take a cue from the new "Superman" animated series. With the exception of it's bright 'n' early time-slot, that show's got the Motts.

7. DAWN

Dawn's depth-perception must be so out of whack. Yeah, she's a healthy-lookin' girl and probably has a solid 20/20, but she's always got a fist-full of hair blocking out her right eye. And what's with that hair anyway? She and Madame Hydra go to the same hairdresser? And what's the deal with the orange locks and black eyebrows? Why not switch to Maybeline no-streak mascara? And doesn't she know that silicone implants can lead to all sorts of health problems? And eating bacon at every meal? C'mon, that's how Jack Palance died in "City Slickers"! We're too worked up now to continue. On to Spidey.

8. SPIDER-MAN

Wow...Spidey all the way down here in the number eight slot. That must make all those idiots responsible for the Spider-Clone stories *real* proud. Hey, guys, you're responsible for one of the darkest blotches in Marvel Comics history. Way to go. And while it'll be a loooong time before a lot of Spidey fans will come back, at least Marvel's smelled the coffee. Plans are to kill that abomination of a character Ben Reilly (the clone), get Peter back in the Spidey suit, get rid of the Spider-baby and stick Petey back in a college setting.

9. GAMBIT

Yeah, we'd pass out too if we had a chance to score with Rogue and blew it. Which got us thinking...how tough must it be being an X-Man? No, not having to deal with prejudice, Sentinels or inconsistent writing, but to have to concentrate during a battle when you're surrounded by super-hot babes like Jean Grey, Storm, Psylocke and Rogue. C'mon, you have the world's hottest redhead, platinum, purple and, uh, striped. (So, does Rogue use a little white dye or a lotta brown dye in her hair?) And did we mention skin-tight suits and the chilly weather of upstate Westchester, New York? Tough life, man.

10. X-MAN

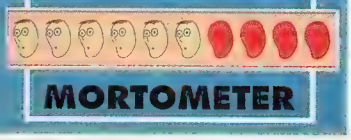
What were we just saying about hair dye? And what's with the giant fried egg on his eye? Let's see why this X-Man fella is so screwed up. Do we hear...origin recap?!? Cue dramatic music: X-Man is an alternate dimension (one ruled by Apocalypse) Nathan Summers (the son of Cyclops and Madelyne Pryor, Maddie being an evil clone of Jean Grey), who, as you know, was taken to the future, cloned, grew up, returned to this time period (along with his clone) and became Cable (with the clone becoming the MLF leader Stryfe). So, to sum up, X-Man is a teen Cable from a parallel world. Now go take some Advil.

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

UNCLE SAM

Anybody else got a hankerin' for some Hebrew National franks? Anyway, Uncle Sam here is a special kind of stupid. Here goes: throughout history, when America's freedom was in peril and things looked bleak, the spirit of Uncle Sam would appear and bond with blue-blooded Americans (who were always named Sam or Samuel), creating the super-strong, nigh-invulnerable (along with his nifty "can travel between dimensions if he concentrates hard enough" power) Uncle Sam! Then he'd run around and right wrongs in tight striped pants, a top hat and a sign reading "Beat me" taped to his back. (Anybody else feeling about as patriotic as Hitler right now?)



BULL PEN

House Party

It was great until the cops showed up.

To help welcome newbies Chris Duncan (Designer) and Matthew Senreich (Editorial Assistant) to the Wizard Press fold (and celebrate Specials Editor Doug Goldstein's birthday), those three crazy kids threw a party at their rockin' pad (Did we mention they were roomies?). While the party was an overall swingin' success, there were several moments that really stood out as something special:

10) Pat McCallum and Matt Senreich fishing inebriated Wizard staffers out of the bushes.

9) Andrew Kardon pocketing $54 on a dare to eat half a can of Easy Cheese off a dry-erase marker board full of dry-erase marker ink.

8) Marc Wilkofsky doing a surprisingly good job karaokeing U2 songs (surprisingly good in that he didn't hurt himself or any houseplants).

7) That thing Pat found at the bottom of his beer.

6) Drunken "Watch the stick, buddy!" bumper pool.

5) Dan Reilly blow-drying his hair with a Bar-B-Q (safety tip: don't let the gas run too long on those grills, kids).

4) Doug's grilled mystery botulism weiners (one of which hit Dan in the head).

3) A blushing Brian Cunningham getting offered a "free shot at 'em."

2) Phil Colligan projectile-vomiting onto the wall (At eye level, no less!) and leaving a six-foot trail to the john.

1) The cops.

One of the Damned

Matthew Senreich

Editorial Assistant, *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I write a bunch of news stories, edit a few columns like "Card Market" and "Creator Profile," do some AOL stuff and talk on the phone all day with creators—I like schmoozing. I just do whatever the powers that be—Joe, Brian and Pat—tell me to do.

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
If I said "Wizard News," it'd be cheating, so "Trailer Park," with "Toy Chest" as a close second.

What amazes or surprises you most about the Wizard offices?
The Mego House of Horror in Andrew Kardon, Scott Beatty and Mike Searle's office. Sick people.

Favorite movie of all time?
"Star Wars"...and perhaps "Strange Brew," the best stupid movie of all time.

Favorite book of all time?
H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*.

Favorite TV shows?
"The Simpsons," "Party of Five" and "The X-Files."

People would be surprised to know that you...
...just turned 22 years old, and have been working in comics for six years. Thanks, Marvel, Defiant, Broadway, CBLDF and *Wizard*. ☺ Sorry...been waiting a while to do that.

Favorite comics right now?
Strangers in Paradise, Bone, Astro City, Green Lantern and a bunch of other DC titles.

Favorite comic of all time?
The Masters of Evil story in *Avengers* #273-#278; I think that was when I first thought, "Hey, it would be cool to work in comics."

Favorite superhero, and why?
Green Lantern, 'cause he makes his imagination come to life.

What are/were your nicknames?
Matthead, Sunrise, Scrench.

What superpower would you want, and why?
To make dreams reality at will.

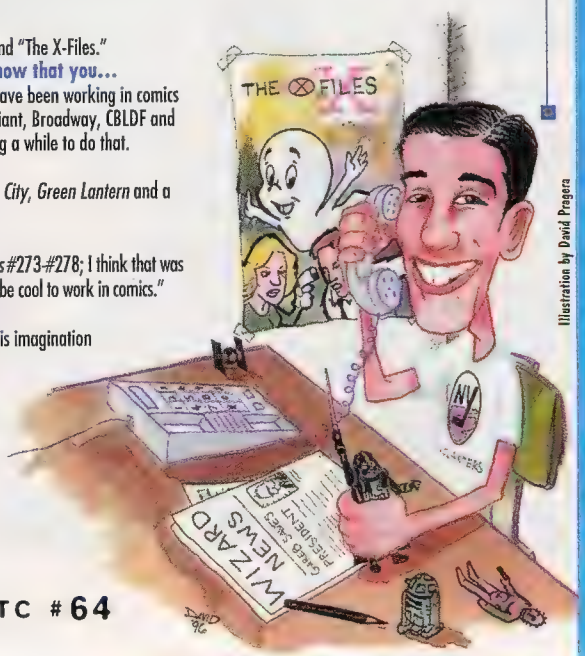


Illustration by David Pragera

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 comic laws we'd pass if we won the Presidential election

10. Hal Jordan restricted from reconstructing all of space and time, or he'll face a $100 fine.
9. Batman required to smile.
8. Death penalty for any use of a sideways comic-panel spread.
7. Jim Shooter allowed to launch no more than one new company per year.
6. Two-year moratorium on launching any new X-books.
5. All new artists must learn how to draw first before being called artists (subsequent loss of 87% of all working comic "artists").
4. Anyone dead stays dead, dammit!
3. Bad Girls must change a light bulb at least once per day.
2. Public executions for crappy creators who screw with good characters.
1. No showing Batman's hiney in the movies.

CONTEST WINNERS

PURGATORI, ISSUE #59:
Paul Ludivico, Jamesburg, N.J.
RANDY BOWEN, #59:
Craig White, San Francisco, Calif.
(Craig suggested that Randy create a "true Spider-Man" statue, and wins a one-of-a-kind Decapitator model!)
STAR WARS, #60:
Steven Pearlman, Verona, N.J.
1,001 COMICS, #60:
Fidel Arbolaez Jr., Lakeland, Fl.

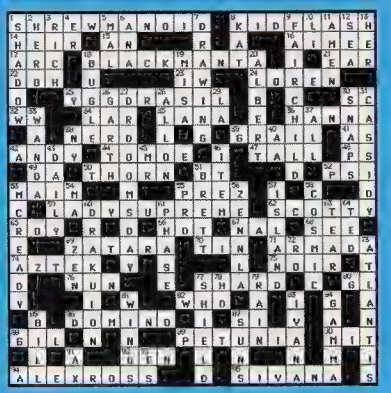
C.B.I.Q. answers...

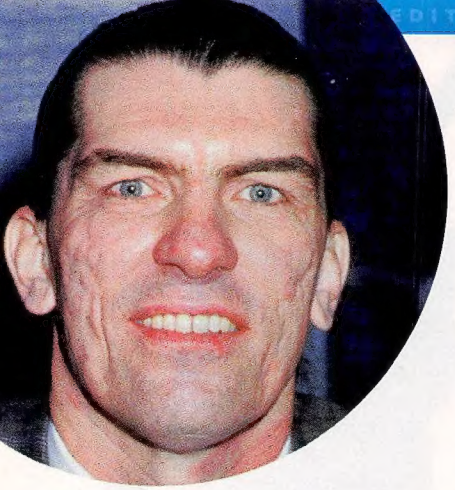
from page 202

1. C	5. A	9. D	13. D	18. A
2. B	6. B	10. A	15. B	19. D
3. D	7. B	11. A	16. D	20. A
4. C	8. C	12. C	17. B	

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 203





JIM SHOOTER

A REVOLVING DOOR OF INDUSTRY KNOW-IT-ALLS

GUEST COLUMN

LEARN YOUR CRAFT OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES!

Cackling evilly, the Editor-nazi pushed the writer's script back across the desk toward him with a crooked, blue-stained finger. "This will *never* do," the Editor-nazi hissed. "You're going to have to *introduce the characters*!"

"*No-o-o!*" screamed the innocent victim of this hideous oppression. Swiftly, he raced down the hall to a more appealing editorial suite, manned by a benign soul, the Editor-without-a-clue. Touched by the writer's plight, the Editor-without-a-clue looked up from typing his own freelance work for another editor down the hall, the Editor-without-a-care, just long enough to sign the writer's voucher and accept the script.

Relieved, the writer went off to talk bad about the Editor-nazi in the fanzines. Happily, soon thereafter his check came in the mail. And not long after that, the comic book he had written was published—and, of all the people in this vast land, only the few thousands who had read all four hundred and twelve previous issues could make any sense out of it. Some of them liked it, some didn't, and some couldn't care less because they bought it to keep their runs going. The hundreds of new readers who picked it up because of the cool cover found it to be unintelligible—except for the three who thought it must be deep, because they didn't get it.

The events described above are way too typical in our business. Only the names have been changed to protect Bob, John, Mike and most of the rest.

People in this business are curiously resistant to learning their craft. Mention anything about story architecture or dramatization or communication, and the average comics creator starts to bristle, certain that you're trying to interfere with their *style*, their apparently God-given right to do whatever the hell they want, even with characters not their own, and their unique personal vision—generally a regurgitation of their favorite movies and comics.

Feh.

Craft is not about creating and telling a story *my* way, the *editor's* way or *any* way, in particular. It's about organizing what you have to say and communicating it effectively. There are *no* rules, *no* absolutes, nothing that must *always* be done and nothing that must *never* be done. But why not know the fundamentals of story and storytelling? Writing is architecture as well as art. Why not learn the principals of visual/verbal communication that have been discovered in a century or so of work by cartoonists and film-makers? Does it hurt to have more tools in your toolbox, more skills and devices at your command?

I came across a novel once, the title of which escapes me—sorry—which was written as if transcribed from the protagonist's thoughts. All other characters were referred to as he or she. There were no introductions of any characters in the traditional sense, though a picture of the protagonist and her world slowly emerged. It was brilliant.

Anything is possible. There are no absolutes.

But I can already hear the excuses. "Oh, sure," creators say, "but what about the Editor-nazi types who really *don't* know what they're doing and are just making you jump through lots of arbitrary hoops because they're evil or because they think that's their job?" To these creators, I would say at least *consider* the idea that the editor *might* have a point. *Check!* Ask other people. If he or she is consistently saying that your points are not clear, give your work the *civilian test*. It's a focus group, sort of. Ask friends, strangers or relatives who don't know the story to read it. Include a few non-comics-junkies. Maybe the editor is right and you need to improve your craft. If so, just run to some loser editor who will allow you to continue to suck.

If not, consider changing your situation. If you're getting no feedback, and/or your editor seems incapable of intelligently discussing story or storytelling, you may already be working with a loser editor. If the loser editor is telling you to do ridiculous things and you have other options, you might want to get away from them. If they are essentially ignoring you, then you still might want to get away from them, because sooner or later their apathy or ineptitude will hurt you. If you need the work and/or have no options, I'd suggest that you use the focus group trick and discreetly consult with people that you suspect know what they're doing and let their input help you improve your work.

Value craft. Cherish it. Never let yourself slide. Learn from everyone you can. If you run into Will Eisner, ask him questions. Read books.

The lack of craft is making comics difficult to enjoy, even for aficionados, and impenetrable to outsiders. It's killing us.

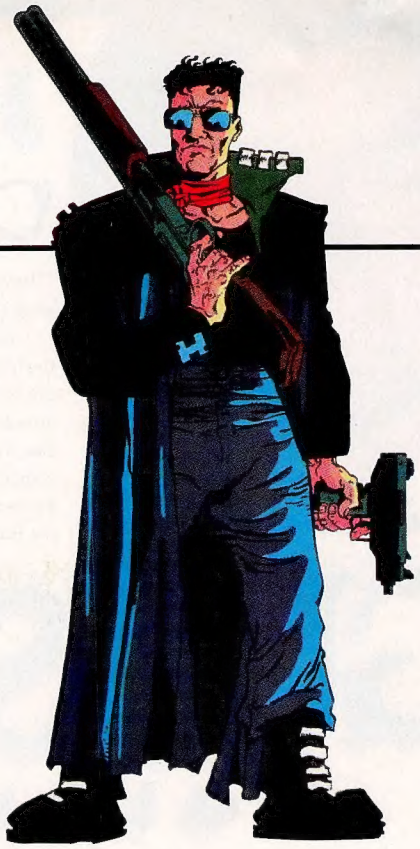
Creators, grow up. Lose the hand-stapled-to-the-forehead-I'm-a-genius attitude. Bear down, learn your craft, and start acting like professionals. W

Since breaking into comics at age 13, Broadway Comics Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter co-writes and edits all of Broadway's current titles.

WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

JOHN McCREA



John McCrea and Garth Ennis have become quite an item. And, on the strength of their work in the critically acclaimed "Troubled Souls" story, *Demon* and now *Hitman*, McCrea, a good-natured 30-year-old resident of Belfast, Ireland, is not about to bite the hand that helps feed him.

"I guess you could say that Garth and I are joined at the hip, but the operation to separate us would cost too much money," chuckles McCrea, who is recovering quite nicely from the previous day's birthday celebration for the big three-O. "I've been trying to get rid of him, but I haven't had much luck."

McCrea does not need much luck, as his style is a highly adaptable and enticing mixture of fine lines and progressive structure. "I tend to adapt my style to whatever the feel of the book requires. I can be incredibly cartoony, grim and gritty or very loose and easygoing. Whatever works for a book works for me."

The artist, born and raised in Belfast, was, by his own estimation, "a shy, retiring, geeky kid who got beat up a lot. I had a lot of friends, but my friends were geeks too." McCrea took a hankering to comics at age 4 and immediately had designs on a pro career. "I thought this is what I wanted to do."

He got serious at age 18 when, after washing out of a university art course after two months, he turned to comics in the face of "further unwanted education and a future of [awful] jobs." McCrea began his march to comics stardom on the dole, dutifully drawing four pages a week and sending them out to every company on the planet. Four years of perseverance resulted in his first pro work, in 1988, pushing pencils for three issues worth of British Marvel's *Action Force* book. He followed with his first Ennis team-up on the story "Troubled Souls" for the anthology comic *Crisis*, published by the Fleetway company. He teamed with Ennis again on a sequel to "Troubled Souls," called *For a Few Troubles More*. A Judge Dredd story followed, as did a Fleetway one-shot called *Middenface McNulty* with Alan Grant, before perceived shabby treatment by Fleetway led to McCrea once again teaming with Ennis for a run at DC's *Demon* that, counting a missed issue or two, lasted from issues #40-#51 and included *Demon Annual* #2.

His current ride with Hitman is proving a playground for McCrea's talents. "Hitman is a gritty *film noir* type of book. I've had fun upping the contrast and getting real down and dirty with the book."

McCrea knows it sounds corny and just a tad cliché, but he sees his comic life as destiny. "Comics have always been my life. For me, comics are completely and utterly everything. It's like this was something I was born to do."

by Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
Avengers #5

Favorite comic of all time...
The Steve Ditko *Amazing Spider-Man* run. I felt those were the most exciting times in comics, and during that run, Ditko was the master storyteller.

Favorite work of your own...
Carnosaur Carnage, an anthology of dinosaur stories. I was able to do what I felt like doing, which was dinosaurs in a really cartoony style, *a la* "Calvin & Hobbes."

Comics you read...
Tyrant, Generation X, Stray Bullets, Sin City

Superpowers you would most want...
X-ray vision and telepathy would do very nicely.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
Beer

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid, an inflatable Hulk in a cage. As an adult, a Galactus toy.

Things you collect...
Comics, records, videos, beer bottles, general crap.

Person who would play you in a movie...
Myself.

Favorite cartoon...
"Road Runner"

Person you would most like to work with...
Director John Woo

Favorite TV show...
"Monkey," a Chinese action series.

Last good movie you saw...
"Fargo"

Last good book you read...
When the Fat Lady Sings, by Alisa Kwitney

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd have peace, love, happiness and the power to make my books sell real well. W

No Apologies.

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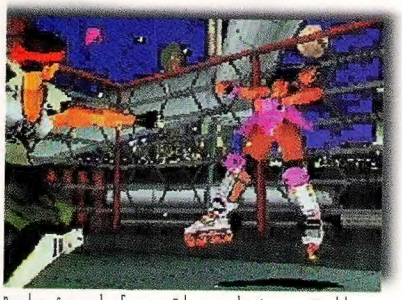
Born in arcades. Abused. Caged. And brought to your home.



Body-Spank Foes Through Cage Walls.

Beat-Strip Opponent's Armor.

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